

**Safe sisters: limitations of sister city relationships for
international peace building**

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Declaration of originality

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is provided. All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the University of Tasmania's Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

Barbara Lloyd

13th September, 2010

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Contents

<i>Declaration of originality</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Statement for authority to access</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Contents</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Purpose and scope of the thesis</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Outline of the chapters</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Chapter One: Situating the study</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Seeking solidarity in a disconnected world</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>The state stands for war</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>The city stands for peace</i>	<i>12</i>
Table 1. Peace-building Motivations and Capabilities of Local Authorities (Summarised from Galtung, 2000:861-862)	<i>13</i>
<i>Sister city relationships as peace building projects</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>The European twinning movement</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>The American sister cities movement</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Australian sister city relationships</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Sister cities and risk management</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Chapter Two: The development of the project</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Constructing the object of study</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Methods and methodology</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>A sister cities model</i>	<i>75</i>
Figure 1. Internal organisation of the sister cities peace model	<i>76</i>
<i>The sister cities structure</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>The sister cities concept</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>The boundary object concept</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Setting up a boundary object</i>	<i>90</i>
Figure 2. The consensus-boundary-risk object continuum	<i>92</i>
<i>The consensus object</i>	<i>92</i>
Table 2. Causes and consequences of consensus movements in 1980s America (summarised from Lofland, 1993).	<i>96</i>
<i>The risk object</i>	<i>98</i>
<i>Chapter Three: The Olympia-Rafah public hearing</i>	<i>105</i>
<i>Background: The Madison-Rafah proposal</i>	<i>105</i>

<i>The Olympia-Rafah proposal</i>	110
<i>The setting</i>	113
<i>The debate</i>	115
<i>Response from council</i>	129
<i>Theoretical implications</i>	138
<i>Chapter Four: The Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city relationship</i>	143
<i>Background to the relationship</i>	143
Figure 3. Cartoon from ‘Aussie Bagel’ blog, 20.07.07	147
<i>The Jewish Board of Deputies’ perspective</i>	147
Figure 4. Chain of harm constituting the Bethlehem-Marrickville sister city relationship as a risk object	154
<i>The councillor’s perspective</i>	154
<i>The Friends of Bethlehem’s perspective</i>	160
<i>The mayor’s perspective</i>	163
<i>Postscript</i>	170
<i>Theoretical implications</i>	172
<i>Chapter Five: The Leichhardt-Hebron sister city proposal</i>	174
<i>Background to the proposal</i>	174
Figure 5. ‘It’s the Inner West Bank’ (<i>The Daily Telegraph</i> , May 26, 2007)	181
<i>The Friends of Hebron’s perspective</i>	181
<i>The mayor’s perspective</i>	187
<i>The Inner West Chavurah’s perspective</i>	193
<i>Postscript</i>	200
<i>Theoretical implications</i>	202
<i>Chapter Six: American-Iraqi sister city relationships</i>	204
<i>Background to the relationships</i>	204
<i>Situating the consensus object</i>	207
<i>Constructing the consensus object</i>	218
<i>U.S-Iraqi sister city activities</i>	221
<i>The innocent child</i>	225
<i>Family values and the metaphoric gendering of political space</i>	235
<i>Theoretical implications</i>	242
<i>Chapter Seven: Alternative directions</i>	248
<i>Background</i>	248
<i>Metaphors of ‘separate spheres and hostile worlds’</i>	249
<i>City symbolism: The spectacle of the metonymic wedding</i>	256

<i>From national to nationalist sister city discourses</i>	266
<i>Theoretical implications</i>	281
<i>Chapter Eight: Discussion and conclusions</i>	282
<i>Ambiguity and ambivalence in sister city relationships</i>	282
Figure 6. Position of Middle East focused sister city peace projects on the object continuum	286
<i>Naming the problem</i>	287
<i>Ambiguity in the ‘risk objects’</i>	289
<i>Ambiguity in the ‘consensus objects’</i>	296
Figure 7. Position of consensus objects in relation to social and consensus movements.	300
<i>Peaceful cities and belligerent states</i>	301
<i>From ‘class society’ to ‘risk society’</i>	306
<i>Implications for policy and practice</i>	309
<i>Limitations and strengths of the study</i>	315
<i>References</i>	320
<i>Appendix 1. Profiles of Olympia, Marrickville and Leichhardt</i>	365
<i>Municipality of Olympia</i>	365
<i>Municipality of Marrickville</i>	365
<i>Municipality of Leichhardt</i>	366

Abstract

The focus of this study is the capacity of sister city relationships to build international peace under conditions of ongoing geopolitical conflict. Although credited with high potential in popular, political and academic discourses, peace focused sister city relationships have been the subject of minimal empirical research. As socially constructed realities, these relationships offer an opportunity to uncover processes through which personal and collective meanings are translated into structures of social inclusion and exclusion at the local/international interface. As a concrete point of reference, I identify the ideal function of sister city relationships as the boundary object, an abstract or material intermediary through which actors from diverse social worlds work productively together on shared projects. Employing a symbolic interactionist theoretical framework and the research methods of observation, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis, I examine sister city peace proposals and relationships between American/Australian cities and cities in Palestine and Iraq. I address deficiencies in the existing literature by formulating an empirically and theoretically supported and testable analytical model, comprising two components: the 'concept' (a blend of 'human family' and 'citizen diplomat' tropes) and the 'structure' (the local authority/citizen group dyad).

The sister cities peace model is seen to break down under the pressure of competing imperatives to manage risk, preventing the creation of boundary objects. Instead, dissonance within the 'concept' component produces 'consensus objects' (U.S.-Iraqi relationships), which mimic boundary objects by creating a misleading impression that communication across significant difference is being achieved in the interests of positive social change. Incompatible meanings within the 'structure' component result in 'risk objects' (U.S./Australian-Palestinian proposals), which are deemed by local authorities to be sources of danger and consequently ejected from council agendas. The model is concluded to be highly flexible, but insufficiently robust to meet the high expectations placed upon it. For citizen peace actors, its semantic plasticity results either in engulfment of their universal sympathies by nationalist agendas, or disappointment and resentment when their initiatives are rejected at the local scale. For local authorities, it engenders acrimonious divisions within their municipalities and ambiguities in their obligations to citizens. The single successful Western-Palestinian proposal examined is judged to have succeeded due to an atypical absence of local opposition, but is considered significant in other dimensions. The thesis concludes with a discussion of alternative directions in sister city relationships and implications of the study as a whole for local government policy and practice.

Introduction

Purpose and scope of the thesis

This thesis investigates the limitations of sister city relationships for global peace building. Sister city relationships connect urban areas around the world for purposes of mutual cooperation, and are established through formal agreements signed by the respective municipal governments. In Western countries, they are usually supported by citizen groups, which arrange a variety of exchange programs and festivals aimed at promoting cross-cultural understanding, friendship and knowledge sharing. The term ‘sister’ cities’ is also commonly used to refer to metropolitan areas that cross national borders, such as Ciudad Juarez in Mexico and El Paso in the United States, and for cities for which a compassionate bond is felt, for example when they become the victims of terrorism or natural disasters. These last variants lie outside the scope of this research.

Collectively, sister city relationships constitute a popular and rapidly growing urban ‘movement’ with a global reach. Sister Cities International (SCI), the national headquarters for sister cities in the United States, claims to represent 1,749 international communities in 134 countries around the world (SCI, 2010). Many more similar relationships are co-ordinated by the European Union under the name of town or city ‘twinning’. Although the terms ‘sister cities’ and ‘twinned cities’ are often used interchangeably, I distinguish between them on the basis of their primary geopolitical orientation. Sister city relationships are also common in Australia, where over five hundred towns and cities have at least one international ‘sister’ (Sister Cities Australia, 2009). In spite of their near-ubiquitous international urban presence, however, this

significant form of inter-municipal cooperation remains under-researched and under-theorised across all academic disciplines (O'Toole, 2000, Cremer, Bruin and Dupuis, 2001, Mascitelli and Chung, 2008).

This thesis addresses that deficiency, with specific reference to the capacity of sister city relationships in the United States and Australia to serve as vehicles for international peace building. Sister city relationships are commonly identified in academic, institutional and popular discourses as having a high potential to lead the way to a more peaceful world, particularly in opposition to the 'belligerence' of nation states. However minimal empirical support exists for such claims, and none at all that is applicable to conditions of serious, ongoing geopolitical conflict. There is also a disjuncture between the theory and practice of what I term 'sister city peace relationships' – that is, sister city relationships for which international cross-cultural peace building is specifically identified as their primary goal – in that areas of the world that are most in need of peace building programs are often bypassed or rejected as municipal sisters. This disjuncture is currently most apparent in attempts to connect Western cities with cities in Palestine, which have historically met with vehement local opposition¹.

The conflict in the Middle East generates stressful background conditions which challenge the peace building capacity of sister city relationships. Since September 11th, 2001, the U.S-led 'war on terror' has created a climate of fear in Western cities, in which people from countries associated with acts of terror have become primary targets of suspicion. This development alone does not, however, explain the specific and ongoing

¹ See, for example, Barron (1989) and Hurd (2004).

marginalisation of Palestinian cities in sister city practices, since Iraqi cities that are also sites of terrorist activity are enthusiastically embraced as municipal partners. The processes through which particular Palestinian cities come to be rejected as sister cities, while equally, if not more dangerous Iraqi cities are accepted, form the primary analytical focus of this study.

In order to identify the limits of the capacity of the sister city movement to build peace at an international scale, I examine individually three proposals in which cities in the United States and Australia sought to partner with Palestinian cities, and collectively, several partnerships between American and Iraqi cities. All of these proposals were initiated against the background stress of the escalating conflict in the Middle East, but had significantly different outcomes. I then conduct an overview of alternative directions in sister city practices under less intense contextual conditions.

The data for the study were collected between 2006 and 2009, during the administrations of President George W. Bush in the United States and of Prime Ministers John Howard and Kevin Rudd in Australia. I employed a qualitative methodology within a symbolic interactionist framework, using the methods of observation, semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis. The research questions to be addressed were as follows.

- 1 Why are sister city relationships with objectively dangerous Iraqi cities accepted uncritically at the local scale, while proposed partnerships with similarly dangerous Palestinian cities are strongly opposed?
- 2 Through what processes are the meanings given to these cities, and to the people who live in them, translated into the structural inequality of formal acceptance or rejection?

- 3 What do the answers to these questions reveal as to the capacity of sister city relationships to facilitate peace building under conditions of severe, ongoing geopolitical conflict?
- 4 How do these findings relate to broader sister city practices?
- 5 What implications do they have for policy and practice in local governance?

Outline of the chapters

In chapter one, I discuss the historical and theoretical contexts which gave rise to the research questions. These include an overview of various interpretations of the roles of nation states and cities in general, and of sister city relationships in particular, in shaping world systems of war or peace. In contrast to essentialist representations of cities, and of the sister city relationships they enact, as inherently oriented towards peace, I draw on accounts of contestation and resistance in sister city discourses. I also provide background information on the European twinning movement to the extent that it relates to the broader sister cities movement, as well as a summary of the history of sister city relationships in the United States and Australia.

In chapter two, I provide a more detailed account of the context for the Western-Middle Eastern sister city relationships which constitute the primary empirical focus of the thesis, and discuss the methodology and methods employed in the study. I also identify the specific goal sought by sister city peace actors as the boundary object (Star and Griesemer, 1989), a bridging entity that facilitates cooperative endeavour between actors from diverse social worlds. I then construct a theoretically and empirically supported analytical model of sister city peace relationships to serve as a coherent referent for the sister city peace projects analysed in chapters three to six.

In chapter three, I conduct an analysis of a public hearing which was held in early 2007 in the American city of Olympia, in order to decide the

outcome of a proposal to link Olympia as a sister city with the war-torn Palestinian city of Rafah on the Gaza strip. Despite being supported by a clear majority of speakers at the hearing, the proposal was defeated. I argue that this was due to its transformation into a 'risk object' (Hilgartner, 1992) at the local scale, due to the threat it was understood by the local authority to pose for stability within the city.

The focus of chapter four is the Australian municipality of Marrickville, which successfully sistered with the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, also in 2007. The Marrickville proposal was opposed by the mainstream media and by a local Jewish organisation and indirectly censured by the Australian Federal Government, but attracted no significant opposition at the local scale. Although it became emplaced as risk object variant, I argue that this particular relationship has the potential to become a boundary object at the international scale.

In chapter five, I examine a sister city proposal in the neighbouring Australian municipality of Leichhardt. In this instance, the Palestinian city under consideration as a sister city partner was Hebron, which, like Rafah, is a city devastated by war. This proposal was opposed at the local scale, but in a more moderate form than that experienced in Olympia. Due to the perception by the local authority that it was causing division within the municipality of Leichhardt, the proposal was withdrawn from the council agenda, also becoming a risk object.

In chapter six, the focus is on a qualitatively different kind of outcome, which I term the consensus object. Consensus objects are exemplified by sister city relationships with Iraqi cities, which were introduced in 2004 by the

United States government as a strategy for improving its globally damaged reputation. Discourses surrounding these relationships create the impression that they achieve communication across significant difference in the pursuit of global peace. I argue, however, that they allow for only one ‘definition of the situation’, which accords with the foreign policies of the U.S. state, and that their peace building capacity is accordingly severely compromised.

In chapter seven, I change direction, in order to provide an overview of alternative directions being taken in culture-based sister city relationships. These relationships operate under less stressful background conditions than those with Middle Eastern cities and offer the greatest likelihood of boundary object formation. However the three trends that I identify indicate that the sister cities movement as a whole is moving further away from a peace building role. Two of these prioritise the economic development of cities, while the third also suggests an embryonic turn towards a nationalist agenda in Australian sister city relationships.

Chapter eight is the final chapter in the thesis, and provides a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of the data and analysis. The combined results of the study indicate that the high expectations placed on sister city relationships, and on the local councils that ultimately bear the responsibility for approving and maintaining them, are not only misplaced but also unreasonable. I conclude the thesis with suggestions for future research and for improved practices in local governance with respect to sister city relationships.

A brief profile of each of the three Western cities from which most of the empirical material is drawn (Olympia, Marrickville and Bethlehem) is

contained in Appendix 1. These are promotional profiles sourced from city web pages and are included to provide additional contextual information.

Chapter One: Situating the study

Seeking solidarity in a disconnected world

Reflection upon the state of human bonds in the early twenty first century would appear to yield scant support for visions of a cohesive world order. Global news coverage delivers alarming, up-to-the-minute reports of war, ethnic violence, institutionalised human rights violations, famine and environmental catastrophe. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 2001 and thereafter, hopes that the end of the Cold War would put an end to international conflict have faded (Altman, 2000, Lawson, 2002), replaced by a diffuse preoccupation with risk and uncertainty on the parts of political institutions and the people they claim to represent (Body-Gendrot, 2004, Gullestad, 2006). Human lives are said to lie in fragments (Bauman, 1995), as climbing rates of depression and suicide (WHO , 2004), a dominant ideology of selfish individualism (Bellah et al, 2007) and widespread civic withdrawal (Sennett, 1992(a), Putnam, 2000) signal a concerted flight from an apparently meaningless and frightening world. The confident expectations of modernity seem to be crumbling, giving way to a loss of faith that human endeavour can shape a brighter future. Denzin (2003:223) sums up a prevailing mood of despondency: “we live in dark and bitter times”.

The pervasive reach of these manifestations of malaise marks them as public problems which, as noted by Mills, (2000), must be addressed by means of public solutions. Since Mills identified this aspect of what he termed ‘the sociological imagination’ in the late 1950s, the public ‘sphere’ has undergone a transformation. It is now technologically mediated and global in scope (Beck, 2002), necessitating and facilitating cooperation between racially, culturally

and politically diverse ‘others’, whose social and political institutions may themselves be internally fraught with division and conflict. It is also increasingly ill-defined, merging with domestic concerns of the private sphere as political action shifts from structural to cultural framing (Pakulski, 1997, Turner, 2001, Stevenson, 2003), democratic institutions realign their policies towards a governance rather than government paradigm (Stoker 1998, O’Toole, 2005) and private individuals feel “caught up in a swirl of world events” over which they have no control (Denzin, 2003:222). Academic understandings of the public sphere are also allocating increased attention to emotional as well as rational dimensions of civic communication.² In a world of shifting boundaries (Levine, 2007) and contingent solidarities (Bauman, 2001), the challenge is therefore to construct networked public institutions within which significantly diverse interest groups at all scales of human interaction are motivated and enabled to work together on the construction and maintenance of shared public goods such as peace, social justice and environmental sustainability, while also addressing issues of personal salience, such as identity and emotional attachment. Such institutions would constitute ‘spaces of hospitality’ (Dikeç, 2002, Friese, 2004, 2008) in which the perspective of the ‘other’ would be heard, acknowledged and, as far as possible, understood. As the “political expression of the nation” and “matrix of modernity” (Arnason, 1990:224), the nation state has historically constituted the principal framework for analysing global connections between geopolitically disparate agents. However according to theorists such as Scheff (1994), Galtung (2000) and Beck (2001), it has proved unequal to the task, and

² For discussions of the role of emotion in the construction of civic identity and engagement, see Barbalet, 2002, Elliott, 2003, and Proctor, 2005.

new paradigms are required to address the urgent conditions faced by global populations in the new millennium.

The state stands for war

Scheff (1994) and Galtung (2000) view the nation state as an inherently divisive, belligerent and therefore discredited entity, ideologically and structurally antithetical to the project of building global solidarity. For Scheff (1994), international conflict is the macro-level expression of emotion-based, pathological gendered ideologies characteristic of alienated relationships at all levels of contemporary civilisations. Building on Anderson's (1983) notion of 'imagined communities', Scheff (1994) locates ethnic nationalism, and the 'primary' emotion of shame, at the basis of a global war system, within which nation states act out cycles of humiliation, honour and revenge. These problems are compounded by the reluctance and possible incapacity of national governments to acknowledge the role played by emotion in generating and sustaining conflict (1994: 65).³

Galtung (2000) frames the Western state system as a 'catastrophe' for global peaceful co-existence, as it affords nation states the legal authority to enact violence on their own citizens and, in the context of war, the citizens of other states. While allowing for the possibility of state reform, he remains pessimistic regarding the prospect of such an outcome, concluding that the "state/nation system as we know it today is no peace system and will not become one: state/nation systems and peace systems are incompatible" (2000: 860). Bauman (1995) identifies the conceptual boundedness of nation states as

³ Scheff's (1994) identification of the emotional basis of international conflicts is supported by the work of Costigliola, (1997a, 1997b, 1998, 2000), whose case-based studies demonstrate the macro-political consequences of the emotions of gendered individuals during the Second World War and Cold War periods.

a catalyst for what was probably the greatest moral disaster of the twentieth century, arguing that the statelessness of the Jewish people provided a cognitive justification for the holocaust: “In a world fully and exhaustively divided into national domains, there was no space left for internationalism, and each scrap of the no-man’s land had become a standing invitation for aggression. *The world tightly packed with nations and nation-states abhorred the non-national void. Jews were in such a void: they were such a void*” (1995:53, emphasis in original). Finally, Beck (2002) questions the value of the nation state as an analytical category, given the reality that people, loyalties and risks now “slosh across national borders” (2002:50). States, he argues, cannot but react negatively to such flows and the threat they pose to the integrity of their boundaries. For Beck (2002), the nation state is obsolete, a ‘zombie category’; functioning, but without sufficient vitality to address the complex tensions between global societies.

These arguments point to a need for an alternative paradigm around which a new world order based on global cooperation might be constructed. While Beck’s (2002) suggested model is a ‘cosmopolitan state’, the favoured paradigm of many activists and social theorists is a long-established geopolitical entity with a somewhat chequered pedigree for peace-building capacity - the city. For Galtung (2000), the peace theorist and sociologist whose work most exemplifies this approach, what is required is “more city-logic and less state-logic in the world” (2000:861); a shift away from state structures and symbols, which undergird and legitimate the current ‘war system’, towards a system based on the city as a global symbol of peace.

The city stands for peace

Cities are complex and confusing constructions (Kunstler, 2001), permeated with ambivalence and ambiguity. Both social institutions (Mumford, 1997) and concrete conglomerations of buildings, streets and other functional constructions (Toffin, 1990), they are now the standard mode of human cohabitation (Swyngedouw and Kaïka, 2003). The city is also an abstraction, a composite of images and subjective interpretations that give it meaning (Toffin 1990:101). Cities are simultaneously local, embedded in place-based histories and experiences, and global, accommodating ceaseless ‘flows’ of money, people, information and ideas (Castells, 1991). Their position as commercial centres in a globalised world requires them to compete for human, abstract and material resources as well as to co-operate and share knowledge and expertise (Levant, Kundak and Gülümser, 2004). They are dynamic, at the forefront of the development of civilisations (Hall, 1998) but also ‘sluggish’, organised by means of physical, social and economic structures that have crystallized through the years and do not readily change” (Bollens, 1998:19). They are sites of conflict, inequality and social exclusion (Stren and Polèse, 2000, Madinipour, 2003) and of cooperation, unification, and civic consciousness (Belanger, 2009). As centres of industrial production, they drive wars between nations, yet are also the primary victims of war and other forms of political violence (Stanley 2003, Graham, 2004). Within the context of broader conflicts, a given city can play multiple and oppositional roles, “including target for intergroup hostilities, stage for the expression of antagonisms, accommodative arena and peace building opportunity” (Bollens, 1998:5).

The identification of cities primarily as international peace actors in the light of this mixed and dubious convenance is thus counterintuitive, but it is

predicated on the particular motivations and capabilities arising from the structural and symbolic organization of cities, as detailed by Galtung (2000). These are summarised in Table One, below.

Motivations of Local Authorities	Capabilities of Local Authorities
Cities cannot have armies, and this affects the world views of those who govern them: “For he who has a hammer, the world looks like a nail”. As a consequence, local authorities are disinclined to see solutions to problems in military terms and more willing to take a stand against such solutions, for example, by declaring their cities to be nuclear free zones.	Exchanges of people and ideas across national borders are city-based. Civil society is meaningless without a municipal framework. People meet and interact, within and among municipalities.
Cities do not act as depositories of national traumas and myths, which can foster a pathological sense of special status and unique destiny.	Unlike international NGOs, which tend to be internally monochromatic, municipalities of all sizes are mirrors of society at large, embodying heterogeneous mixes of gender, classes, cultures and professions.
The victims of war, maldevelopment and ecological breakdown are local, so efforts to address these issues must also be local. It is therefore in the interests of local authorities to link with other human settlements, for formulating solutions and providing mutual sustenance.	Because of the heterogeneity of cities, local authorities are accustomed to managing complexity at the coal face of everyday experience. The administrative structure of cities is conducive to expansion to include, for example, the formal office of a municipal peace councillor.

Table 1. Peace-building Motivations and Capabilities of Local Authorities (Summarised from Galtung, 2000:861-862)

As noted by Blanco (2003), cooperation between cities on an international scale is an emerging trend in urban management and governance. Horizontal networks between cities provide opportunities for disparate social groups and bureaucracies to share knowledge, expertise and recreational experiences. Such exchanges can translate into an improved quality of life for the residents of both partnered cities. By means of organisations such as the World Association of Cities and Local Authorities (WACLAC), the United Cities and Local Government Association (UCLG), Metropolis, Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and Mayors for Peace, cities around the world are now networking in order to address common challenges and inequalities in urban life and organisation (Alger, 2005).

Local governments are also said to be ‘closer to the people’ (Fry, 1998, Farazmand, 2004), providing “a far more concrete space for politics than the nation” (Sassen, 2004:655). Concerns that the foreign policies of national governments are against the interests of local communities have given rise to what has become known as municipal foreign policy or city/municipal diplomacy (Falk, 1993). By establishing their own international relations offices, or simply by building connections with cities located in countries that are problematic from the perspective of national governments, local authorities seek to influence or even bypass the foreign policies of states. The Canadian city of Hamilton for example, declared itself a ‘mundialized’, or ‘world city’, as early as 1968, and its people ‘true citizens of the world’ (Fragomeni, 2003). As detailed in chapter two of this study, even when not aimed directly at peace building, joint urban endeavours that address tasks of mutual concern can

provide opportunities for perspective taking and recognition of mutual concern among diverse social actors.

Bush (2004) identifies peace building as a key role of local government, arguing that

(m)unicipal governments play a crucial role in encouraging/harnessing/facilitating participation of various stakeholders in promoting peace including supporting local level, community based peace initiatives involving peace advocates from the ground. Public participation and community-based mechanisms such as dialogues, consultations and public information campaigns may be effectively undertaken by municipal governments in partnership with peace advocates and peace bodies in the community, possibly even at the national or international spheres (2004:5).

Peirce (2007) posits an essentialist orientation towards peace in the persons of individual mayors themselves. “There’s even a practical peace imperative among mayors that might restrain power-wielding national governments”, he argues. “Responsible for constituents’ everyday safety and welfare, mayors speak a practical language and instinctively recoil at warring ideologies” (2007:2). Arguing for a new city-based peace paradigm in international relations, the Mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatashi Akiba (2009) also frames city mayors as intrinsically trustworthy and peace promoting.

We mayors live in the cities we serve. We are close to our people. When they suffer, we suffer. If we say that the roads have been repaired and the garbage collected, the people are able to see with their own eyes whether or not we are telling the truth. In other words, there is a fact based trust between mayors and citizens. This trust is the power that will create a better future we all aspire for. Cities do not maintain armies. When we form intercity relationships, we do not form military alliances, we form sister-city partnerships. We seek to grow and develop not through competition,

dominance and control of resources but through trade, exchange, cooperation, sharing of responsibilities, and mutual benefit (2009:17).

Institutional and academic discourses thus frame municipal governments as bearing a responsibility as well as a capacity for peace building beyond the local scale. Such high expectations, however, can lead to inattention to the limits of agency and inclination on the parts of the governments and citizenries of the far-from-homogenous twenty-first century city. In considering local governments as peace-building institutions, particularly in opposition to states, it is necessary also to bear in mind the structural and ideological limitations experienced by real institutions operating at the local level. Dollery and Johnson (2005), for example, caution that to speak collectively of urban governments is to gloss over the complexity of ‘real world municipal systems’, which vary considerably in terms of political cultures, administrative structures, scope of service delivery, and resources. At a time when the responsibilities of local governments are being extended, their funding from national agencies is being reduced; Berry, Portney and Thomson (2003) frame local government as “like a third world country in comparison to the federal government in terms of resources available” (1993:117). This situation obliges local authorities, as compulsory players in the world economy, to focus on developing ever more creative and strategic methods of generating wealth as a key priority (van Vilet, 2002). City councils are also subject to rising expectations (Raynsford, 2005) and intense scrutiny on the parts of ratepayers (Dollery and Johnson, 2005:83) and the media. Both are quick to condemn perceived misuses of the time and energies of their officials, and particularly of council income derived from the obligatory payment of

rates. Furthermore, councils are required to respond to the sometimes incompatible identity-based demands emanating from the complex mix of ethnic groups that now characterise even smaller cities around the world.

It is therefore incumbent upon researchers conducting empirical investigations into the potential of local authorities to function as international or transnational peace-building institutions to take into account their constraints and limitations, rendered visible in the responses of specific city governments and urban populations to particular initiatives on the parts of citizen action groups. This thesis constitutes such a project, using the example of the rapidly expanding international urban movement invoked above by Mayor Akiba of Hiroshima, known in the English-speaking world as sister city, or town twinning relationships.

Sister city relationships as peace building projects

‘Sister city relationships’ is an umbrella term for a highly diverse range of urban-based images and practices. Since the mid twentieth century, there has been a growing trend for international cities to create formal inter-municipal partnerships, often, but not always, in conjunction with citizen volunteers. In recognition of its now global reach, Zelinsky (1991) calls this phenomenon ‘the twinning of the world’. There are no binding conventions or expectations as to the nature of these interactions, other than that of benevolent intent. They can range from “social clubs with an international flavour” (Shea, 2002:219) to humanitarian aid projects conducted in opposition to national foreign policy (Alger, 1990). Sister city relationships “perform important expressive functions by generating the kind of awareness necessary to stimulate concrete action” (Hobbs, 1994, cited in Hobbs and Chernotsky, 2001:61).

Cahill (2003) identifies productive relationship building as the primary purpose of a sister city program. “It’s about experiences with and in another language” he reports. “It’s about interaction with various cultures. It’s about education and cross cultural understanding. It’s about revenues. It’s about helping prepare young people to succeed in a global environment. It’s about fun”. In practice, sister city activities routinely involve expressions of mutual good will and exchanges of people and information between each partnered city. Those who travel in person to sister cities are typically local politicians, citizen volunteers or school students. The disparate intentions and practices identified by Cahill (2003) may seem relatively humble in scope, but collectively they are said to lead to a far higher gain. Despite minimal empirical support for such claims, sister city relationships are frequently identified as vehicles for the establishment of a new world order based on cross-cultural, inter-urban communication and perspective taking.

For Zelinsky (1991), the rapid increase in sister city relationships around the world unmistakably signals “the formation of an interactive planetary society, for the first time ever in human history, and that this novel interconnectivity has begun to enmesh all strata of humankind, not just a privileged elite” (1991:2). Baycan-Levent, Kundak and Gulumser (2008) understand sister cities as contributing to the production of a global culture through building cultural dialogue and common values (2008:107), while for Galtung (2000) they constitute “an excellent and visible example of international civil society” (2000:862). Kavoloski (1990) argues that they can function as a site of non-violent resistance to the “bellicose, short-sighted and dangerous” policies of nation states (1990:174), while Barash and Webel

(2002) see them as playing the role of intermediary, serving to “break down the political, geographical and ideological barriers between states” (2002:366).

Honig (1997) characterises sister city relationships as “affective sites of located, institutional transnationalism”, which “interrupt projects of (re)nationalisation by generating practices of affective citizenship that exceed state boundaries” (1997:131). For Honig, (1997) the movement “in some ways exemplifies and may yet help to build a future democratic cosmopolitanism” (1997:131).

Iriye (2002) identifies sister cities as an example of ‘grassroots’ organisations, which may hold the potential to unite humanity on a global scale. Echoing Galtung (2000), he argues that, in contrast to states, international organisations

have proved quite successful in reconciling differences because their own weapons are ideas, a sense of commitment, and voluntary service. They have not spent billions on arms, nor have they engaged in mass killing. They are civilised societies, and so they have a mission to turn the world into a civilized community” (2002:192-193).

Adams (2008) cites Boli and Lechner’s (2005) claim that Cold War era sister city relationships served as a means of “cross-pollination of cultures across the Iron Curtain”. “From the perspective of world polity theory”, he argues, “it is just these kinds of international institution-building activities that form the basis of “world culture,” contributing not just to a universal recognition of the importance of folk cultures, but also to the universalization of values such as human and minority rights” (2008: 626). `

An empirical examination of sister city relationships, however, reveals a reality that is more complex and conflicted than such representations would suggest. Formalised inter-municipal partnerships can send a clear message to the populations of international cities that they are accepted as equal human beings and desired as friends, but they can also serve as a means for tainting particular international urban others with courtesy stigma (Goffman, 1963), by virtue of their association with, and assumed endorsement of, problematic governments or ways of life. The German city of Ratstatt, for example, suspended links after 30 years with its French sister city, Orange, after an inauspicious election result. “Rastatt's Social Democratic mayor felt there was no way to work with the "inhumane policies" of the National Front” reports the academic information base Migration Dialogue (1995); “The Belgian city of Liege also broke ties ... with the French city of Toulon”. In addition, a sister city agreement with the French town of Nice was torn up by Brisbane Lord Mayor Jim Soorley in 1995, in protest over French nuclear testing in the Pacific (Heywood, 2002), the Italian city of Reggio Emilia discussed severing its relationship with Fort Worth over the issue of capital punishment (Apple, 2002), and the Australian pearling town of Broome suspended its sister city relationship with Taiji in order to express the repugnance of its citizens towards the Japanese practice of hunting dolphins (Taylor, 2009). However it is discourses concerning Chinese sister city relationships that perhaps most extensively illustrate the tensions and ambiguities that can complicate sister city relations across significant cultural and political difference.

The macro political implications of sister city symbolism are not lost on the Chinese government, which oversees its country's international municipal

contacts and intervenes directly in established sister city relationships when its policies are breached. In 2006, the city council of the U.S. city of Irvine found itself embroiled in political conflict when details of an agreement it had signed with Xuhui district in Shanghai became public. Slupsky (2006) records that the new agreement had contained a contentious proviso relating to a prior sister city agreement between Irvine and Taoyuan City in Taiwan.

We promise that there will be no occurrence of 'two Chinas' or 'one China, one Taiwan' and that on any occasions and in any forms the names of 'Republic of China' and 'Taiwan' will not be used and its so-called 'national flag' and 'national anthem' will not be hung and played. The city officials of Irvine will not visit Taiwan Province in their official capacities and will not attend the so-called 'National Day' celebrations and other activities.

Following vocal local protests in the form of meetings, emails and phone calls, Irvine council apologised repeatedly to the people of Taiwan and Taiwanese residents of Irvine and renewed its commitment to its sister city relationship with Taoyuan. After two years, however, the council was still feeling the repercussions of the controversy, and municipal leaders decided to withdraw the city's financial support for the Irvine Sister Cities Foundation. Months later, the foundation itself was dissolved (Emery, 2009).

In 2008, in the Australian city of Melbourne, the Chinese government again perceived an international threat in the form of a politically contentious film 'The Ten Conditions of Love'. Following weeks of Chinese protests, hacker attacks on the Melbourne International Film Festival's website, reports of death threats to festival staff and boycotts by Chinese filmmakers, Chinese authorities threatened to sever Tianjin's sister city relationship with Melbourne

if the city's Lord mayor did not intervene to prevent its screening (Mangan, Stark and Toy, 2008). Despite these warnings, the film was screened on schedule, with minimal consequences for the Tianjin-Melbourne sister city relationship.

More commonly, however, China is on the receiving end of attempts to regulate sister city relationships. Skelsey (2005) cites a Sydney councillor's contention that Australian local authorities should be wary of sister city relationships with Chinese cities, since they are "rife with corruption" and "signing the agreements gave extra status to these rotten boroughs". In 1996, a more complicated situation arose when Berkeley city council received a proposal from the informal U.S./China Exchange Program, regarding a sister city relationship with the Chinese city of Changde. Immediate protests came in to council from groups supporting Tibetan causes, and members of Berkeley's Peace and Justice Commission were faced with a dilemma as to what kind of signal should be sent by the city. As councillor Dona Spring explained, "we do not want to insult the people of Changde, but we don't want to make it seem as though things are hunky-dory in China" (Chao, 1996). By way of a compromise, council voted to make Changde a 'step-sister city' (Harper, 1996), by formalising, but immediately suspending, the relationship. In the view of Glen Gilbert, executive director of the Berkeley-based International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet, affording formal recognition of the sister city relationship "would be rewarding the government of China for its violation of human rights", but for Ann Fagan-Ginger, another member of the Peace and Justice Commission, a formalised relationship "could provide a model of local democracy" for the Chinese city. "This is step backward in our understanding

that the sister city relationship is city to city” she argued. “It's not city to nation. Berkeley legally can't establish a relationship with the Chinese government” (Harper, 1996).

Commissioner Michael Sherman, who had helped draft the proposal before the city council, was troubled by the ambiguity and complexity of the issue under discussion. “Politically and philosophically”, he remarked to the press, “I support sister cities as a way of helping people all over the world to get to know other people. But there was a lot of anxiety in my mind about this whole thing” (Chao, 1996). Councillor Polly Armstrong abstained on all China-related votes, maintaining that such matters were beyond the purview of local authorities: “My theory is that until we get our own problems straightened out in Berkeley, we have no time to interfere with other people's problems in other places” she declared (Harper, 1996).

Earlier in that same year, Sukhi Turner, the newly elected Mayor of Dunedin, New Zealand, had refused to lead a delegation to her city’s sister city of Shanghai, citing China’s “human rights abuses, nuclear testing and other unacceptable policies” (Eunson, 1996). The ensuing public debate focused on the proper scope of the mayoral office and the appropriate boundary between the mayor’s private morality and official obligations. As one local newspaper reported,

Mrs Turner's advantage is that while councillors are elected from wards, she was voted in by the electorate "at large". She sees that as a mandate from Dunedin as a whole, but recognises the chain of office symbolises a duty to place the city's welfare before her own ... [Her stance] has made her the butt of business-based criticism, some claiming it is "a tragedy in terms of the city's links with Shanghai"; one that she had put her principles ahead of her responsibilities as mayor. A former Shanghai resident was quoted as saying

that "while China has got problems, India has them too" -- a reference to Mrs Turner's Indian background ... Mrs Turner is learning it is not enough just to be different and to not confirm with the majority of her elected colleagues. She has a right to speak out, to stand firm on issues she regards as essential to the maintenance of her integrity, and with experience she might well acquire an ability to adapt so that what might be seen merely as a personal belief does not trip up a wider public concern. Politics is, after all, the art of the possible, and requires a degree of compromise to work (Eunson, 1996).

Ten years later, Mayor Turner's successor, Peter Chin, was expressing a very different 'definition of the situation' to the local press. For Mayor Chin, there appeared to be no conflict of interest in asserting the primacy of his Chinese identity, which accorded with his commitment to re-establish strong ties between Dunedin and Shanghai. Responding to a question about human rights, Mayor Chin announced that he was aware of the issues but would not be taking them into account. "I look at it from the point of view that I'm Chinese", he explained. "That is my background. This is my mother country" (Eaton, 2006). Mayor Chin's approach also accorded well with his city's economic development agenda, with particular regard to of a free trade agreement that was under negotiation, As Eaton (2006) reports, New Zealand's 'diplomatic' reticence with regard to human rights issues had brought tangible rewards for the country as a whole.

Trade Minister Phil Goff ... is frank about the need to tread carefully. "It is within the context of the foreign ministry portfolio that human rights is raised. I don't talk human rights on trade," he said ... Sister Cities New Zealand director Brian Cross said human rights were not even on the agenda. China's growing political and economic importance meant it was often the case that suitors tended to walk on eggshells. "I think it is an understandable diplomatic approach that we do that," Cross said. "But we like to think, and you see demonstrations of it at the micro level, that as we develop relationships and

have more trust we can talk to people in a more forthright manner. "That is a lot of the philosophy behind the sister cities movement ... The regularity with which New Zealand officials outside the Foreign Ministry shy away from human rights issues has not gone unnoticed in China. One academic at a prominent Beijing university said on condition of anonymity that officials were surprised but appreciative of New Zealand's "softly softly" approach and that it was likely to bear fruit. Without it, New Zealand would probably not have got as far as it had on an FTA [Free Trade Agreement]".

Also emanating from a New Zealand city was a contested motion put forward in 1999 that "the Christchurch City Council include in the proposed criteria to be used in the selection of new sister cities and the evaluation of existing sister cities, a requirement that sister cities "provide their citizens with democratic rights similar to those enjoyed by Christchurch citizens". In response, one councillor suggested that it "would be like sending missionaries only to Christian countries", while another argued in support, citing Nelson Mandela's statement that severed links had helped bring an end to apartheid in South Africa. The serving mayor of Christchurch, Garry Moore, was aghast at the proposal, commenting that "(i)t is the belief in this sort of purity which raised the Berlin Wall. To cut off China out of a feeling of "purity" would be raging hypocrisy" (Crean, 1999:4). Mayor Moore went on to ask a council staff member how many of Christchurch's existing sister cities would be affected if the motion were to succeed.

In reply, the staffer said that USA (Seattle) had been condemned by Amnesty International for carrying out summary executions, that recent events had shown that UK (Christchurch, Dorset) police were racist, Japan (Osaka) continued whaling, that the United Nations had condemned Australia (Adelaide) for the way it treated the aboriginal people, and that Korea wasn't democratic as we use the term. He added wryly that even Christchurch would fail as our own sister city, for in the past week Pamela Jeffrey had awarded

New Zealand only a B+ grade on the human rights scale (New Zealand Embassy, 1999).

The debate over Christchurch's sister city relationship was still current in 2007, when Amnesty International members approached the council, requesting the support of Mayor Moore - who was in China at the time promoting sister city relationships - in their campaign against human rights abuses in China.

However the mayor had left instructions that no-one from council should receive the group in his absence (Eaton, 2007). A more sympathetic response came from the news media, which applauded Amnesty's opposition to Christchurch's "ugly sisters".

Amnesty International is right to challenge Christchurch Mayor Garry Moore -- and other New Zealand mayors -- over their dealings with China. Appalling human rights abuses are an uncomfortable reality of that country and cannot be ignored in doing business with it. The issue should be raised by the mayors when they are enjoying Chinese hospitality on the strength of sister-city relationships, if only because they represent communities that cherish freedom. It is convenient for mayors such as Moore to hide behind the traditionally harmless notion of sister cities and the argument that such sensitive matters are not the business of local governments. That argument fails on two points. As Amnesty points out, Chinese local governments -- the guardians of our "sister cities" -- are often implicit in the human rights abuses. Second, by seeking to expand those sister-city agreements into something more lucrative, New Zealand mayors are unavoidably broadening the scope of what is at stake ('Opinion', The Press, 2007:A22).

As these instances illustrate, sister city relationships can serve as a discursive resource for stigma application and resistance at the level of international municipal relationships. Importantly, though less frequently, the fictive kinship and consequent recognition of common humanity that they entail can also provide a pathway out of an established deviant status. In the aftermath of

World War II, war-time images of the Japanese as ‘reptiles, insects, rats, cockroaches, vermin and baboons’ (Steuter and Wills, 2008) had to be transformed in the American public consciousness into images of friends and allies. During the 1950s, sister city relationships played a role in repairing relationships between these former enemies, by supporting national-level projects of reconciliation (SCI, 2004, Kurata, 2008). For the mayor of Dachau, the process was more challenging, due to the intense level of stigma attracted by the proximity of the notorious concentration camp of the same name. This highly committed mayor strove unsuccessfully for many years to find a sister city as part of a strategy to counter “unjust prejudices” against the town and its residents (Marcuse, 2001:332). Dachau now has two urban partners under the European twinning scheme and is seeking to form a reconciliatory sister city relationship with Jerusalem (Kalman, 2009). Meepas (n/d) notes the existence of one hundred twinning relationships between German and Israeli towns and districts, formed explicitly as part of the post-war reconciliation process.

Smothers (2005) recounts the less politically significant but nevertheless uplifting story of the transformation of Newark-on-Trent, a “gritty” English city that in the mid 1980s had been “mired in crime and synonymous with urban blight”. In 1987, on hearing of a suggestion that the American city of Newark, California might be considering changing its name in order to distance itself from its British namesake, the English mayor hastened to contact his U.S. counterpart to work towards a positive reframing of the Newark image. Together, the two mayors instigated a sister city network of cities named Newark around the world. International Newark residents can now “tour local sites, sample local entertainment and food, and generally

plumb the significance, serendipity or synchronicity of their common name ... They will [also] be able to visit a new exhibit at the Newark Public Library that examines the history of all the Newarks". In the words of the mayor of Newark, California, "It's now like a bunch of cousins, and I'm just looking forward to seeing my cousins. I marvel at the diversity of all the people from all the Newarks. We revel in our Newarkness" (Smothers, 2005:B1).

Communication within and between sister cities is revealed by such examples to be a far more complex, ambiguous and contested phenomenon than is generally acknowledged in public and academic discourses. The broad scope and indeterminate nature of this 'movement' has particular consequences for its application within specific urban settings, especially with regard to its peace building capacity. Before proceeding further with this line of argument, however, I pause to situate present-day sister city and twinning relationships within their historical contexts, since it is there that the high expectations currently placed on current sister city relationships have their origins.

The European twinning movement

In the wake of the Second World War, a phenomenon known as 'town twinning' emerged in Western Europe. The combined result of independent initiatives on the parts of municipal authorities (Gaspari, 2002, Vion, 2002) and local humanitarian groups (Brown, 1998, Weyreter, 2003), the movement sought to build solidarity between former European enemies, thereby reducing the risk of any further 'fratricidal' warfare. While structured friendly relations between international cities had existed in the past, the spontaneous efforts made by British citizens and citizen groups to help the people of nations responsible for the recent decimation of their own cities constituted a new and

more popularly significant step in inter-municipal solidarity. Brown (1998) writes of the courage needed for the citizens of Bristol, which had been heavily bombed during the war, to twin with the German city of Hannover. In 1945, the German city had been suffering intense material and symbolic deprivation, a time known to the Germans as 'Stunde Null' (the Nothing Time). Germany had been "completely destroyed physically and civic authorities had ceased to exist. The Allies, in their separate occupation zones, were not only conquerors but providers, administrators and educators. But the world, reeling from the discovery of the concentration camps, was holding the entire German nation responsible" (1998:3). The almost immediate humanitarian response from the people of Bristol was financed by an eclectic coalition of churches, trade unions and Bristol University, and kept in check by occupying military forces in the vanquished partner city. Permission for open contact was given by the military government within the confines of its own agenda: humanitarian interactions were not to be used for "exercising pressure, either direct or indirect ... with reference to political matters" (1998:3-4). The idea of concerned citizens, non-government organisations and an occupying military force working together to restore peace, order and prosperity in a former enemy city is an emotionally and morally compelling frame, which, as will be seen in chapter six of this study, was to be invoked nearly sixty years later to help justify a military occupation of a very different nature, following the US-led invasion of Iraq.

The close kinship connections of European royal families and the geographical proximity of the warring countries led to a post-war metaphoric understanding of the European theatre of war as a 'fraternal' conflict. This

representation of macro-political processes in terms of fictive kinship tropes later provided an interpretive framework, or ‘plausibility structure’ (Berger, 1967), for what has been argued to be the appropriation of the town twinning movement by the European Union. For the EU, the primary allegiance afforded by European citizens to their own nation states comprised a challenge to the formation of a European identity, which needed to be overcome in the interests of consolidating a more peace-prone supranational institution. North (2002) however, is highly critical of the instrumental orientation of EU interventions, arguing that while the goal of town twinning had originally been to fend off the threat of war,

(w)hat made this project different was that “twinning” itself was not the objective. It had been “hijacked” to become a means of achieving – in the eyes of its promoters – a far more noble objective. This is revealed by the oath that each municipality was required formally to declare, before it was admitted to the scheme. It was:...to maintain permanent ties between our municipalities, to encourage exchanges in all domains between their inhabitants so as to develop, through a better mutual understanding, the notion of European brotherhood, to join forces so as to further, to the best of our ability, the success of this vital enterprise of peace and prosperity: the union of Europe.

In the English, French and Italian languages, the names for the town twinning phenomenon (if not their usage, as indicated above) denote a gender-neutral understanding of urban based fictive kinship between equal siblings. The twinning metaphor carries no suggestion as to which city is to be deemed the older or younger sibling, neatly avoiding any status discrepancies that might otherwise ensue. The Greek term *adelphopoesis*, however, shifts the focus of

the imagery explicitly onto gender, foregrounding a concept of kinship that is at the same time fictive and based on blood. ‘Brothering’ processes draw on cultural traditions that stretch back to the pre-modern social order. As Papagaroufali (2005:346) explains,

“(a)delphopoesis” stems from the words “*adelphos*” (“brother”) and “*poesis*” (or “*poiesis*”: “making of”). Its male character is due to ceremonies between male family/clan representatives, since ancient times, in order to prevent mutual feelings of hostility or to amend murderous acts of fighting. Partners would cut their veins and mix their blood in order to ensure the immutable nature of their fictive kin ties.

Papagaroufali (2005) is critical of what she interprets as the EU’s colonisation of local ‘sensory-affective performances’ for the purposes of generating new feelings of incorporation into an emergent European identity. Through public rituals of ‘twinning’, which she identifies as ‘the master trope of the same’, deep and ‘authentic’ emotions of local place attachment and belonging through blood are transformed - abetted by indoctrination and the lure of EU funding - into political emotions tying the new European subject to otherwise unlikely kin.

The town twinning movement predates and may well have inspired the American sister cities movement, which constitutes the primary framework for the present study, and the issues it raises have wider implication for inter-municipal peace building around the world. However its present primarily European focus places it outside the scope of this thesis, which addresses inter-municipal relations that, at least in theory, seek to build peaceful relations on a global scale. Although the terms ‘town/city twinning’ and ‘sister cities’ are

often used interchangeably, I therefore reserve the use of the term ‘twinning’ to instances of its use in the general data when referring to relationships in which at least one of the partnered cities is non-European.

The American sister cities movement

American sister city relationships differ from town twinnings in that they ostensibly seek a more global reach (Hafteck, 2003) and are discursively gendered as feminine. As will be demonstrated in this study, the latter aspect has important consequences for the kinds of expectations imposed on sister cities in popular and political imaginaries. The present day American sister cities movement has been coordinated since 1967 by a central administrative body, Sister Cities International (SCI) – identified by Executive Director Tim Honey (n/d) as “first and foremost a national membership organization” - which is located in Washington, D.C. The antecedents of the American sister city movement prior to the inception of SCI in 1967 can be traced to a conglomeration of national and local initiatives. Smith (1990) explains that

(m)ost of the early SCPs [Sister City Projects] in the U.S. grew out of post World War II aid relations with Western European cities. But by 1956 president Eisenhower formally announced the establishment of the People-to-People movement, focusing more on personal relations and understanding than on aid. Of the more frequent later SCPs, perhaps a third were basically started as a result of external organizations or agencies. Some, for instance, were started by the initiation of the educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau, the U.S. Information agency or U.S. embassies of the State department of the U.S. government ... Another important source of initiation was the national or state leagues of cities” (1990:180).

Smith (1990:180) goes on to locate the origins of the remaining two thirds within less formal processes. These include

- pressure from immigrants, or more importantly, from U.S. citizens with a particular ethnic heritage,
- complementary economic interests in business or trade with the same city,
- tourist interest from within either or both partnered cities,
- the prestige for cities of an international status,
- humanitarian desires to provide assistance for international cities in need, or a desire to receive such assistance,
- a desire to build upon serendipitous friendships between travellers from international cities, and
- mutual recognition and celebration of similarities between international cities

As illustrated by this listing, American-based sister city relationships are driven by motives that can be rational or expressive, altruistic or self-serving and local or international in focus. However only one version of the origin and impetus of the movement predominates in popular sister city discourses (see Cremer et al, 2001), which I term ‘the Eisenhower story’. In calling it a ‘story’, I do not suggest that it is untrue, but rather that it provides a partial, coherent yet ambiguous narrative, in relation to which peace-seeking sister city officials and volunteers are able to make sense of and articulate their own positions within the movement. On the sister city web pages of cities around the world, the tale is told of how Eisenhower developed the program in the early 1950s, as a way to involve ordinary people in America’s quest to reduce the risk of another world war. In his *Remarks at the People-to-People Conference* speech on September 11th, 1956 (a date that was to hold particular significance for proponents of sister city peace relationships in the following century), Eisenhower called on ordinary U.S. citizens to reach out to unknown

international others, who, despite their differences, were connected to American citizens through their common humanity and desire for peace.

A particular part of the work that we expect to do is based upon the assumption that no people, as such, want war--that all people want peace. We know this to be a true assumption, but we know also that in certain portions of the world it is not understood as such. Some people are taught--and they are captive audiences--that others, including ourselves, want war: that we are warlike, that we are materialistic, that we are, in fact, hoping for cataclysms of that kind so that a few may profit, they say, out of the misery of the world. If we are going to take advantage of the assumption that all people want peace, then the problem is for people to get together and to leap governments--if necessary to evade governments--to work out not one method but thousands of methods by which people can gradually learn a little bit more of each other (Eisenhower, 1956).

This speech sent an optimistic message to American non-elites they could personally make a difference in warding off the threat posed to the American people, and to the world as a whole, by dangerously misguided communist ideologies and a possible nuclear war. As noted by Endy (2004) however, Eisenhower was personally ambivalent regarding popular participation in international affairs. Whilst favouring a volunteering ethos, he was concerned about the possibility that ordinary Americans representing their country abroad might do more harm than good to America's reputation. "Divided between a fear of the masses and a desire for civic participation" (2004:145), the president distanced the initiative from the formal institutions of government. "Minimizing its Washington origins, [he] praised how the People-to-People Foundation was free from the taint of propaganda" (2004:146). In effect, what Eisenhower had managed to set in motion was a popular movement that was inherently political, in that it was an invention and tool of the state aimed at

strengthening foreign policy objectives, but which would be understood by participants as essentially apolitical, and therefore free from partisan interests and the taint of conflict. Embedded in his speech are suggestions that, fifty years later, were to become particularly problematic for the sister cities movement within the context of the U.S.-led 'war on terror'. Together, they form a message that:

- (a) opposition to United States policies is due to misinformation and misunderstanding,
- (b) which is about the kind of people that Americans are (not about what they do), and
- (c) ordinary citizens are better at solving such problems than governments, because
- (d) their activities are cultural and not political.

Subjectively empowered as global ambassadors, citizens were unlikely to understand direct confrontation with the policies and practices of their own governments to be either an effective or an appropriate dimension of people-to-people relationships. As honorary chairman of Sister Cities International, each successive President could then keep a distanced eye on the operations of future sister city relationships, reassured by that organisation's policy of recognising only relationships formed within countries with which diplomatic relations with the U.S. had been established. Thus normatively and logistically contained, sister city proponents could understand themselves to be loyal patriots who were, with their president's blessing, 'bypassing their respective national and state governments' (Farazmand, 2004:89) in the pursuit of global peace. Only when unwritten rules of conduct were breached, as in the case of sister city projects between American and Cuban cities, did the state perceive a

need to impose regulatory sanctions upon its own 'citizen ambassadors' (see, for example, Valanti, 2001). Sister city relationships between American and international cities are now a common feature of urban life in American cities. In 2005 alone, "more than 64.5 million people read or saw something about a sister city project in their local media" (SCI 'Media Coverage', 2006). By the end of the twentieth century, 150,000 Americans were travelling each year to their sistered cities, either individually or as part of joint cooperative projects (Hobbs and Chernotsky, 2001:61). As of 2001, 1,200 American communities had formed formal ties with 2,100 foreign cities through Sister Cities International (Leroux, 2001).

Sister city relationships do not remain static over time (O'Toole, 2000, 2001). As socially constructed entities, they change and adapt to historical circumstances. Lofland (1993), for example, identifies a 'surge' of what he terms 'consensus movement' politics in the United States during the 1980s, within which sister city relationships with politically contentious international locations became a prominent feature of urban-based peace activism. These included partnerships with Nicaraguan cities formed in opposition to the Reagan administration's funding of the Contras, who were seeking to throw that country's elected socialist government (Kline, 1999:19) as well as relationships with cities in the Soviet Union. Beginning in the 1990s, sister city relationships were also formed between American cities and cities in communist Cuba (Schaefer, 2005).

Interviewed in 2000 by journalist Hélène Papper on the Radio program 'Common Ground', Sister Cities' Executive Director Tim Honey framed sister

city relationships as an enabling local resource for enacting global citizenship, by addressing poverty and injustice on a planetary scale.

We see this network continuing to grow and expand, and to deepen in its impact upon promoting world peace and understanding, to alleviating some of the severest problems that we have as global citizens-problems of abject poverty, problems of aid, problems associated with global warming and climate change. And Sister Cities provides people at the community level who are concerned about these issues, but don't know how they can make an impact-well, through Sister Cities they can make an impact. So you don't have to sit on the sidelines. You don't have to be frustrated because you can't do anything about the AIDS epidemic in Africa. You can do something about it. You can get your community to have a sister city in Africa and have that focus be on AIDS. And you can take any issue like that and really make a difference on the ground at the community level, both in the cities overseas as well the impact upon the US communities.

In the same period, American sister city relationships were also taking a more pragmatic turn, as urban governments responded to the imperatives of economic globalisation. In a globalised economy, cities without the resources and initiative to attract visitors and outside investment can find themselves “bereft and impoverished” (van Vilet, 2002:37). Potter (n/d) notes that “(o)ne of the ways to lower the risks of doing business internationally is to know overseas business partners well. Sister city affiliations have created an ideal market in which to build trust”. Ryan’s (1988) message is more succinct: “Closed minds cannot open foreign markets”. Through listing sister city activities on their websites, an international or global status can be claimed even by smaller cities around the world (Paul, 2005:2015). City marketing can also include the moral appeal of cities. On the thirty-fifth anniversary of its partnership with a northern Israeli city, the mayor of San Francisco remarked

that “(o)ur renewed sister city relationship with Haifa reinforces our position as a compassionate city, respected world wide for our continued dedication to equality and acceptance for all” (City of San Francisco, 2008). Despite their best efforts, however, particular relationships may become casualties of urban growth. When the Japanese town of Awano was annexed by its much larger neighbour Kanuma, the U.S. city of Grand Forks automatically lost one of its sister cities (Tran, 2006).

In a newsletter dated May, 2001, Sister Cities International emphasised “the critical importance of creating new opportunities for their citizens and institutions to be internationally engaged”. On August 29th of the same year, just days before the September 11th attacks, Tim Honey outlined SCI’s competitive “new vision for the future’ of U.S. based sister cities as follows.

As globalization sweeps our planet, we must find ways within our communities to engage internationally in an effort to understand and create “globally competitive communities,” build bridges to foster world peace and human rights, and take tangible steps toward lessening the growing economic divide between the developed and the developing world. In the 21st century, local communities must foster a new international perspective and create innovative avenues for international engagement .. This new international engagement imperative is about the ability of our communities to adapt and change within our rapidly globalizing planet. It is also about (e)nabling our communities to be globally competitive – not only economically, but also in every other aspect of life.., providing a platform for our citizens to be engaged as “global citizens” in whatever aspect of life they choose, ... (e)stablishing partnerships, linkages, and coalitions, and unleashing the incredible interests, passions and talents our citizens have for making a difference by “thinking globally and acting locally. The old bumper sticker of the 1960s has taken on a new legitimacy and a new urgency in the year 2000 (SCI: ‘New Visions for the Future’, 2001).

Shortly afterwards, however, international peace building was back on the agenda as a number one priority for American sister cities. On September 12, SCI President Chuck Stokke and Executive Director Tim Honey posted the following message on the SCI website.

All of us involved with Sister Cities International must speak out against the horrific events of September 11, 2001. As a country and as ordinary citizens, we are now struggling to find appropriate ways to respond. We are all filled with questions and doubts. How do we ensure that such evil forces can never again strike at the heart of our cities? What can we do as ordinary citizens? How can we make a difference? In our hearts we must find ways to break down the barriers that divide us as human beings - barriers that become the breeding grounds for such hatred. We must find ways to communicate with those who speak a different language, have a different religion, or come from different political traditions. All of us are fortunate that through our involvement in Sister Cities we can find tangible ways to respond to this tragedy. Our collective commitment to the Sister City movement speaks to our personal commitment to foster a more peaceful world (SCI, 2006).

This impassioned response introduced two new elements into sister city discourses; the overt identification of particular others as 'evil' and the inclusion of national security and defence on sister city agendas. The conceptual blending of security and peace discourses and the moral condemnation of the malevolent 'other' contained in this seemingly innocuous posting would lead to problematic outcomes in sister city interactions with the Muslim world, as will be demonstrated in chapters three to six of this thesis. The manifest function of the movement, however, as conveyed by its representative and coordinating institution, Sister Cities International, remained peace building on a global scale. In

its 2002-2006 Strategic Plan, SCI reported that it sought “to achieve a peaceful, orderly and just world by assuming leadership in bringing together communities around the world to create a worldwide sister city movement for peace (SCI Strategic Plan 2002-2006). In ‘charting its future course’, the organization expressed a hope that the term ‘sister cities’ would become synonymous with “building a more just and peaceful world” and that SCI itself would one day receive the Nobel Peace Prize (Honey, 2006).

Australian sister city relationships

Australian sister city relationships are the second empirical focus of this thesis. O’Toole (2000a) notes that very little research has been conducted into sister city type relationships in Australia. The first Australian partnerships were not predicated on notions of patriotism or any direct relationship with the state, as had been the case with the American model. Rather, they arose from sentimental attachments to Britain and to the homelands of subsequent migrants. The numerous Italian and Greek relationships listed on the website of the Australian Sister Cities Association (ASCA) in 2004 reflect the ethnic composition of the 1960s diaspora. The first specifically peace focused Australian sister city relationship was formed between Lismore and the Japanese city of Yamato-Takada in 1963. It was instigated by Tony Glynn, a Marist priest and former Japanese prisoner-of-war, who had worked on the notorious Burmese railway. In the aftermath of the war, Father Glynn dedicated his life to promoting reconciliation between Australia and Japan. He is also credited with founding the sister city relationship between Canberra and the prefecture of Nara. The fortieth anniversary of the Canberra-Nara

partnership was jointly acknowledged at a national level by the Australian and Japanese Prime Ministers in 2003 (Clair, 2004:4).

Australian sister cities took some time to cohere as a centralised movement. In 1979, becoming cognizant of the annual sister city conventions held in the United States, a group of interested Australians conducted research into similar affiliations based in Australia. Despite the existence of at least twenty-six sister city affiliations throughout Australia, they found that there appeared to be no interchange between them. As a result of this research, the first Sister City Convention was held in September 1979. Australian relationships are now coordinated and supported by Sister Cities Australia, formerly known as the Australian Sister Cities Association (ASCA), which was formed in 1982. According to its website, the association was inspired by the success of Sister Cities International, and seeks “to provide a forum for cultural, economic and educational interchange between communities and to encourage friendship, co-operation and understanding to improve peaceful coexistence worldwide” (ASCA web page, 2004). Sister Cities Australia now holds an annual conference attended by delegates from Australian and international cities.

O’Toole (2001b) notes the absence of any national policy in Australia in relation to sister city partnerships, which might have constrained their historical development at a local scale. He identifies three phases of Australian sister city type relationships. The first of these, which he terms the *associative*, is based on international friendship, cultural exchange and ‘a general international awareness’. The second aspect is *reciprocatve*, and is characterised by ongoing international exchange programmes. The third is

commercial, which emphasises the importance of local economic development (O'Toole, 2000:43-44). O'Toole (2000) notes that these three categories are not mutually exclusive; in fact most current Australian sister city partnerships involve all three aspects in varying degrees.

As will be seen in chapter seven of this study, the last of these phases has proven problematic for the peace building agendas of Australian sister cities. As in other parts of the world, Australian cities began to feel the effects of economic globalisation as the twentieth century drew to a close, and more prosaic economic concerns began to preoccupy Australian local authorities. As a consequence, cultural sister city projects began to be valued more for their instrumental role in boosting economic development, with the attention of local authorities being diverted towards the negative risk of failing to keep up with other cities competing in a globalised economy. This shift in focus “from mates to markets” (O'Toole, 2000) has been particularly troubling for Japanese sister city partners, who continue to place high intrinsic value on cultural and educational exchange (O'Toole, 2001). Since O'Toole (2000) formulated his typology, a new development has arisen in Australian sister city relationships, in the form of controversial peace-based projects between inner-Western Sydney municipalities and cities in Palestine. These relationships are the focus of chapters four and five of this study.

Sister cities and risk management

A common theme running in the background of the discussion so far has been that of risk management. Sister city enterprises are, and always have been, fundamentally concerned with the management of risk, in the sense that they seek to manage or ward off conflict or harm envisaged as emerging or

continuing in future time. Sister city relationships are also commonly protected from the risk of controversy and unpleasantness by the deliberate avoidance of political discussion. As Lofland (1993) and Eliasoph (1999) observe, politics are popularly equated with conflict and unpleasantness, and consequently avoided by middle class social actors for whom politeness norms are a highly salient dimension of social interaction. However, as Maier (1987) points out, the boundary between politics and culture is indistinct, and, to an extent, arbitrary. Maier (1987) ponders a series of “knotty questions” posed to Seattle local authorities in connection with ‘Initiative 30’, a regulation which sought to limit the city’s sister city activities “primarily to cultural rather than political purposes”.

Nicaragua's vice minister and chief of national police comes to Seattle and reads passages from his highly acclaimed autobiography, "Fire From the Mountains." Is his visit, sponsored by the Seattle-Managua Sister City Association, primarily political or cultural? A photographic exhibit of portraits of Nicaraguans is displayed at the downtown Seattle library under the heading "The Faces of Free Nicaragua." Is the sister-city exhibit primarily political or cultural? The Total Experience Gospel Choir, Seattle's dynamic chorus of youthful singers from the Mount Zion Baptist Church, visits Nicaragua on a goodwill tour. Is the choir's sister-city trip primarily political or cultural? ... Leaders of the sister-city organizations, insisting that political dialogue is an inherent part of cultural exchange, say they have no intention of changing their activities. And city officials say they don't know where to draw the line (1987:C1).

Bill Stafford, acting director of international relations for the city of Seattle, took a pragmatic stance, arguing that the lived realities of sister city visitors from politically sensitive or difficult parts of the world could not and should not be glossed over in the name of polite conversation. “Although sister-city

sponsorship of visits may need greater scrutiny by the city, it would be unreasonable to put politics off limits for visiting government leaders, especially those from a nation at war”, he contended. "What are you going to ask them? What's the latest dance craze?" (Maier 1987:C1).

Pressed to use a sister city visit to Manila to deliver a resolution condemning human rights violations in the Philippines, the event organiser issued a statement distancing his sympathies as an individual from the requirements of official protocol. While he agreed with the sentiment of the resolution, he regarded it as “extremely bad form” for the mayor to raise the issue. “We are there for trade and cultural exchanges”, he declared, “not to right the world in all its facets” (Matier and Ross, 2006).

As can be seen from the various examples examined so far, sister city relationships can be understood as sources of risk in themselves when they are perceived to threaten establish moral orders or institutional imperatives. An editorial of the Daily Telegraph bearing the title ‘Nobody wants them’ (2005) frames the sister city movement as a risk to the moral order, arguing that it addresses only the needs of privileged cities, while the most desperate cities are passed by. The article identifies the Nigerian city of Nguru Umuaro as one of 123 African cities, villages or communities listed on the SCI website that are unable to find an international local authority willing to accept them as a sister. Davis (2005) recounts the resistance encountered in San Diego to a proposal to create a sister city relationship between that city and the Irish corporation Shannon Development. The proposal was contested on the grounds that it was not only “a departure from the sister-city model”, but morally problematic, appearing to be “a veiled corporate tax shelter” and “all about money, not

people-to-people”. Despite strong support from SCI, the project was subsequently abandoned.

Sister city relationships designed to create public goods may also have unintended consequences. Interactions across difference will not always go according to plan, and difficult relations between individuals or failed practical initiatives can jeopardise future inter-municipal cooperation (Hewitt, 1999). Scigliano (1992) claims that the hundreds of North American and European cities that established sister city ties in Nicaragua in order to bypass the U.S embargo against the Sandinistas created ambivalence and embarrassment when the Sandinistas’ opponents were subsequently voted into power. The newly elected government, he claims, “didn’t know whether to shun their new relations or welcome them as sugar sisters” (1992:12). Furthermore, Flint (1999, cited in Maney, 2000) found that sister city assistance had inadvertently fostered local discord in El Salvador, as “differential access to resources provided by sister cities [had] created conflict among domestic agrarian organizations seeking rural development” (2000:338). Cohn, Merrifield and Smith (1989:102) warn that local authorities should approach citizen ‘partnerships’ with care, since particular interest groups might promise “that all they needed was the city’s “blessing”, only to leave the city with major sister city commitments, a need to allocate staff and budget, and promises less than fulfilled”. Business based relationships can also go awry in an unpredictable global market. Grossman (1994) reports that

Te Puke, New Zealand and Gridley, Calif., are barely on speaking terms these days because of the business interest that brought them together: kiwi fruit. Each produces kiwis; each suspects the other has contributed to a global kiwi

glut that as bankrupted many growers. “We no longer have anything in common except grief” says William Burleson, publisher of the Gridley Herald.

A more common form of moral risk held to be posed by sister city relationships focuses on issues of accountability, with specific reference to the alleged misdirection of council revenue towards entertainment of foreign officials and overseas travel for councillors. Almost invariably, such travel is described pejoratively as a ‘junket’, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2002:147) as “an official’s tour at public expense”. In 2001, the Melbourne *Herald Sun* published a critical report ranking thirty-one Melbourne municipalities according to the cost to taxpayers of sister city travel, based on the public register that councils are required to keep under the Local Government Act (Hodder, 2001). Armstrong (2004) quotes retired public policy academic Allan Peachment’s assessment that sister city travel is “like having a first class ticket to travel anywhere you like for as long as you like” and that the spending habits of councillors are out of control. Alluding to the formal exchange of symbolic goods (such as plaques and statues) that is standard practice in municipal sister city visits, Laws (2008) dismisses travelling councillors as “civic piñatas stuffed with gifts”. At issue in objections to ‘junkets’ is the risk they bring to a council’s image, which is closely linked to shortages of municipal funds. As the editor of the Knight Ridder Tribune Business News (2007) remarked, “(s)ending people to Greifswald, Germany, and entertaining those who visit from Germany requires a small amount of city dollars. What is at stake, however, [is] a big measure of credibility”.

Internal disputes within councils over sister city travel are also often aired through the news media. One Berkeley councillor complained to the *New York Times* (1982) that she took “issue with the Mayor’s frequent and long absences which prevent him from providing leadership on local issues. He doesn’t seem to care about the nuts and bolts of running a city”. For the city council of Fort Collins in Colorado, the answer to the stigma associated with sister city travel was to avoid the sister cities name altogether. Their website reports that they have opted for “a different path – similar to Sister Cities - but not quite as formal. A significant portion of our community views “Sister Cities” relationships as an excuse for political officials to travel to luxurious locations. We feel this image could compromise our ability to be seen as excellent stewards of city resources. “Cities of Friendship” allows us to avoid this perception” (City of Fort Collins website, 2002).

The reasoning behind Fort Collins’ change of terminology points to the salience to local councils of what has become known in the management literature (see Power, Scheytt, Soin and Sahlin, 2009) as ‘reputational risk’. This is an organisational form of ‘identity management’ (Goffman, 1959), in which the objective is to fend off discrediting evaluations of the self on the parts of necessary or esteemed others. Atkins, Bates and Drennan (2006) define reputational risk in terms of the putative harm being defended against, namely “failure to meet stakeholder’ reasonable expectations of an organisation’s performance and behaviour” (2006:23). Reputational risk concerns problems of trust in legitimate authority, and its management has become ‘a cornerstone of good governance and responsible actorhood’ (Power et al 2009:301). In extreme instances, however, local councils may find

themselves overwhelmed by competing and incompatible demands to manage risk, and may opt for reputational risk as the least threatening outcome. Such was the case for the New Zealand city council of Masterton, which was hosting a sister cities conference during the SARS pandemic of 2003.

SARS is a deadly and highly stigmatised disease (Siu, 2008) which triggered global anxiety when it emerged from China and quickly spread around the world. In the lead up to the event, more than sixty calls expressing alarm about the risk posed by visiting Chinese officials were made to Masterton District Council and conference organisers, and some representatives of the local hospitality industry had “indicated they would not provide catering, transport or accommodation for fear of infection, threatening the whole conference” (Katterns, Martin and Thompson 2003). Caught between the imperative to protect their own population from physical harm, or from the fear of such harm (see Keil and Harris, 2007), their obligations as agents of local economic development and their responsibilities to their international sister city partners, Masterton city officials decided to ask Chinese delegates to withdraw from the convention (Myers, 2003). Unfortunately, however, the delegates had already arrived in New Zealand by the time the request was made.

The decision to exclude the Chinese delegation was a reputational disaster for the council, which came under attack from all directions. Council members received abusive and venomous emails, labelling them as ‘rednecks’ and ‘racists’ (Dominion Post, 2003). The editor of the same newspaper was quick to condemn the council’s decision, going so far as to frame it as anti-Asian paranoia.

How ironic that a convention specifically organised to encourage cross-cultural contact and understanding should be torpedoed by worried small minds in one of this country's tiniest communities. It is not the first time, of course, that Masterton has won headlines for being less than effusive about our Asian neighbours and trade partners. Last September, Mayor Bob Francis ordered the Japanese flag lowered after some locals, veterans of the Pacific War, were furious to see it flying above the council buildings. It had been hoisted to welcome a group of visiting students from the district's sister city, Hatsukaichi. Sister Cities Association president Jeremy Dwyer believes the immediate damage done by the organisers' decision to advise all Chinese guests to the convention not to come will not be long lasting. Perhaps he is a born optimist. Anyone who deals with Asian cultures knows the importance to them of not losing face, of not embarrassing their hosts and preferring not to be embarrassed in return. This country did \$1.47 billion worth of trade with the People's Republic last year. Our diplomats in Beijing might have a little repair job ahead.

In similarly disparaging terms, the editor of the *Taranaki Daily News* (2003:8) also called attention to the repercussions of loss of face for the Chinese in terms of the New Zealand economy.

Whatever the junketing fraternity of city sisterhood had convinced itself it was achieving, it is back to the starter's gun for the massive China-New Zealand branch. The well-meaning amateurs of international diplomacy, who gathered in Masterton this week for four days of self-congratulation, have undone most of their modest achievements of the last decade or two ... The Chinese culture, which the Kiwi sisters have been eager to explore in endless reciprocal visits, places great importance on face -- not losing it, and not causing offence to guests ... Ignoring the fact that any plane from Asia delivers visitors bound for all parts of New Zealand, mayors Dwyer and Francis ... boldly proceeded where no one from Foreign Affairs would dare to go. A more diplomatically attuned Phil Goff -- aware of New Zealand's \$1.4 billion-and-rising worth of China trade, and rapidly growing Chinese tourist and student numbers -- hastily organised a consolation dinner in Wellington, at which he read a letter of apology from Prime Minister Helen Clark. Masterton's loss became Rotorua's gain.

Katterns, Martin and Thompson (2003) record in more detail the negative reaction of national level officials at the same function. "At a hastily convened dinner last night", they report,

Foreign Affairs Minister Phil Goff said organisers of the Masterton conference were wrong to ban the 43 delegates after more than 60 calls from residents worried about catching the severe acute respiratory syndrome. He said they should not have bowed to public concerns that the delegates may spread the virus, which has killed more than 70 people worldwide. "Can I . . . express my regret that you were not able to participate. It's not redneck or racist. It was an over-reaction in terms of the actual level of risk." The ban had been greeted with fury by [the] Chinese ambassador . . . He warned that the ban could have damaging effects for New Zealand's relationship with China . . . Sister Cities NZ president and former Hastings mayor Jeremy Dwyer [responded]: "I realise it is very embarrassing for the Chinese, and I'm sorry for that but we had to make the call. The level of anxiety within Masterton was very high."

The 2003 SARS debacle illustrates the complexities faced by local authorities as they strive to function as 'risk managers of everything' (Power, 2004) under conditions of fear and uncertainty at the global scale. Faced with the risk of bodily harm to the people they had been entrusted to govern, Masterton council made a moral decision to protect those citizens, even though it meant placing an important sister city relationship in jeopardy. As a result, it suffered a hostile backlash from several fronts, had to repay the cost of the failed convention (Katterns, 2003) and incurred significant reputational harm. In retrospect, council members may well have wondered whether the benefits of the sister city relationship had been worth the extra responsibilities and burdens that had been placed upon them.

The ordeal experienced by Masterton council would come as little surprise to sociological theorists of mid to late modernity. Douglas (1993), for example, contends that risk has become a primarily a tool for apportioning blame and for holding persons accountable; a remnant of the sweeping rationalisation processes that characterise the project of modernity. If risks cannot be managed, they are nevertheless framed with reference to science and calculability, so as to convey the impression that their management is achievable.

Whereas originally a high risk meant a game in which a throw of the die had a strong probability of bringing great pain or great loss, now risk refers only to negative outcomes. The word has been preempted to mean bad risks. The promise of good things in contemporary political discourse is couched in other terms. The language of risk is reserved as a specialized lexical register for political talk about the undesirable outcomes. Risk is invoked for a modern-style riposte against abuse of power. The charge of causing risk is a stick to beat authority, to make lazy bureaucrats sit up, to exact restitution for victims. For those purposes danger would once have been the right word, but plain danger does not have the aura of science or afford the pretension of a possible precise calculation (1993:3).

For Douglas (1993), the close association of risk with blame offers guidance as to who should bear responsibility when calculable negative risks bring negative consequences, a framing that has discomfiting implications for decision-making bureaucrats and politicians. However according to theorists of ‘post’ or ‘late’ modernity such as Bauman (1998) and Beck (2001), the emphasis of risk management has moved away from calculability to reflexivity. “Risk reflexivity makes that which has not yet happened and that which is unforeseeable into an object of present-day action” contends Beck (2001a:17).

For Bauman (1998), postmodern risks are the human-caused products of postmodern freedoms. They are self-perpetuating and inherently uncontrollable, and attempts to manage them are fraught with anxiety and ultimately futile. In the postmodern world, argues Bauman,

our society becomes increasingly a risk-producing, risk-monitoring, and risk-managing society. We do not so much move 'forward' as clear up the mess and seek exit from the havoc perpetrated by own actions yesterday. The risks are our own products, though unexpected and often impossible to predict or calculate. This is because whatever we do, we concentrate on the task at hand ... while the changes we introduce in the balance of nature and society in order to perform that task reverberate far and wide; their distant effects hit back as new dangers, new problems and thus new tasks (1998:279).

For Beck (2005), the primary issue preoccupying the contemporary world is uncertainty. Beck (2005) holds that two different value systems coincide in modern societies, which he equates with 'class society' and 'risk society'. Under conditions of late modernity, risk society comes to dominate, with consequent changes in the primary value systems that collectively shape the social world.

(I)n the transition from class to risk society, the *quality of community* begins to change. Schematically, two totally different value systems are expressed in these two types of modern society. Class societies remain related to the ideal of *equality* in their development dynamics ... Not so the risk society. Its normative counter-project, which is its basis and motive force, is *safety*. The place of the value system of the 'unequal' society is taken by the value system of the 'unsafe' society. Whereas the utopia of equality contains a wealth of substantial and *positive* goals of the social change, the utopia of the risk society remains peculiarly *negative* and *defensive*. Basically, one is no longer concerned with attaining something 'good', but rather with *preventing* the

worst; *self-limitation* is the goal which emerges. The dream of class society is that everyone wants and ought to have a *share* of the pie. The utopia of the risk society is that everyone should be *spared* from poisoning ... The *commonality of anxiety* takes the place of the *commonality of need*. The type of the risk society marks in this sense a social epoch in which *solidarity from anxiety* arises and becomes a political force (2005:49, emphasis in original).

The experiences of Masterton city council can thus be understood within the theoretical context of world risk society to have been an inevitable consequence of their own, equally inevitable, engagement with risk. The SARS pandemic functioned as a ‘risk event’ (Kasperson et al, 1988), which prompted national governments, local authorities and concerned individuals and groups to send messages to each other as to the nature of the risk and what should be done about it. Ambiguous, conflicting and ultimately incompatible meanings and expectations with respect to the risk event, and their own responsibilities in regard to it, converged to form a risk event in themselves, which threatened to overwhelm the local council.

Much the same effect, I argue, occurred in the sister city projects that comprise the empirical focus of this thesis. In order to identify the limits of the capacity of the sister city movement under similar, but different conditions of stress, I examine individually three proposals in which cities in the United States and Australia sought to partner with Palestinian cities, and collectively, several partnerships between American and Iraqi cities. In the case of all of these proposals, the initial risk event was the escalating conflict in the Middle East. I then conduct an overview of alternative directions in sister city practices under less intense conditions of risk. The combined results suggest that the high expectations placed on sister city relationships, and on the local councils

that ultimately bear the responsibility for approving and maintaining them, are both misplaced and unreasonable.

Chapter Two: The development of the project

Constructing the object of study

This study began with my observation of an apparent disjuncture between the theory and practice of the sister cities movement. While optimistic and even extravagant claims are made in popular, institutional and academic discourses as to its seemingly limitless peace building capacity, there exists almost no empirical evidence to support such claims. In practice, as indicated by the broad overview provided in the previous chapter, there are clear obstacles to the capacity of this movement to build bridges of understanding across meaningful difference. Very often, cities most in need of international symbolic and material support are bypassed or rejected as sister city partners. When disagreements arise, particularly when they concern moral issues, relationships can be unilaterally suspended or terminated, effectively dismantling a communicative structure by means of which such differences might be discussed and accommodated. Like the practice of ‘unfriending’ on popular social networking sites such as Facebook, suspensions and terminations of sister city relationships send a clear and public message to partnered cities that they are no longer wanted or acceptable – surely a more potent and alienating statement than if they had never been friends at all.

Compromising the legitimacy of framing sister cities as peace vehicles are two further anomalies. The first is that the ideology behind urban-based peace movements – that it is possible for coalitions between local authorities and citizen volunteers to ‘bypass’ and even ‘undo’ the global scale conflict caused in part by belligerent nation states – directs responsibility for peace building under current conditions of global insecurity and disorder away from powerful states in popular imaginaries, placing it instead on the shoulders of

under-resourced local governments that are, in many cases, struggling to cope with the everyday management of local affairs. The sister cities movement was developed in a spirit of optimism that human endeavour could bring about a more peaceful, just and prosperous world. In this respect, it can be seen as an expression of the project of early modernity, in which “the understanding of self and world, the progress of morality, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness” was held to be within the range of human achievement (Habermas, 1997:45). However, since the mid twentieth century when the sister cities movement was consolidated, the political structures supporting that vision, in particular those of the welfare state and class-based politics, have declined or vanished, and the impersonal logic of the open market is seen to pervade all aspects of human existence. Nowhere, as suggested in the previous chapter, is the outcome of economic reform more apparent than in the field of local government. In the light of these contextual transformations, it is both pertinent and necessary to question the appropriateness of burdening local authorities with such high additional expectations.

Secondly, sister city relationships are a highly indeterminate and ambiguous object of study. As Bell-Souder and Bredel (2005) discovered in their explorations of U.S.-Japanese sister city relationships, and, as my own experience confirmed, it is not easy to define what a sister city means, as each person interviewed is likely to have a different understanding of what is going on. This conceptual confusion can also occur at the international scale, as O’Toole (2001) demonstrates in his study of Australian-Japanese sister city type relationships. Zelinsky (1991), who appears to be the most cited authority

on the subject, is pressed to commit to any stable aspect of the phenomenon he is struggling to define.

Certain characteristics set the twinning of sister cities apart from other forms of long-distance social interaction. The formal agreements, usually made by local officials but occasionally by ad hoc citizen groups, are intended to last indefinitely (although, of course, some may be canceled, suspended, or allowed to wither away for lack of lasting interest). Consequently, the relationship does not limit itself to carrying out a single project, but rather opens the way for a variety of shared activities, all presumably serving the overall objective of advancing mutual understanding and friendship ... The formula for interaction is that there is no set formula. Each pair of sister cities must experiment constantly to realize whatever ensemble of activities ideally suits their particular resources and objectives (1991:3).

“Anything that goes on in a community can become the subject of a sister city project, including health care, environment, arts, education, economic and business development, public safety, municipal training, youth, and much more”, reflects de Leon (2002). The term encompasses “every type of municipal, business, professional, educational and cultural exchange or project” (Sister Cities International, n/d) and “(t)he program possibilities are as extensive and diverse as the sister city network itself” (Honey, n/d). Dawley (1996) notes that “(s)ister city programs are developed out of mutual desires and interest. There is no standard pattern. Projects are limited only by the imagination and resources of the communities”. While Zelinsky (1991) understands sister city relationships as “a cheerful subject’, this is far from a universal framing, as is demonstrated by the range of contestations outlined in the previous chapter. As enacted social realities, sister city discourses and

activities are analytically amorphous entities, saturated with ambiguity and ambivalence.

Further inconsistencies can be seen in sister city relationships that focus specifically on peace building under challenging conditions of existing macro-political conflict. The ongoing violence in the Middle East may well be the most pressing obstacle to a peaceful world order in the twenty-first century, and thus the area most in need of bridging peace building structures, yet some Middle Eastern cities are consistently avoided as sister city partners, while others are uncritically embraced. Cities in Iraq that are, by objective criteria, among the most dangerous in the world (Gerges, 2010) are not only regularly accepted as sister city partners in the United States, but are represented in sister city discourses as spaces of relative normality. Cities in Palestine, by contrast, are frequently discursively constituted as harmful and polluting, and consequently rejected as sister city partners.

Clearly, there are important historical and political differences between the two regions. Iraq has been invaded and is still occupied by U.S. led forces, while the Palestinian Territories are locked into violent confrontation with the state of Israel, which is a U.S. ally. However there are also salient similarities between the two areas. Both are predominantly Muslim and sites of ongoing violence and bloodshed, terrorist activity and anti-Western sentiment – a challenging context indeed for peace building through sister city projects, given the high levels of suspicion and fear of the violent Muslim ‘other’ in the Western world (Fetzer and Soper, 2003, Manning, 2004, Werbner, 2005, Sheridan, 2006). Furthermore, while internal discrepancies in both cities are glossed over in sister city discourses via processes of metonymic reasoning (in which part of a

referent is symbolically taken to stand for the whole), this process works positively for Iraqi sister city candidates and negatively for Palestinian ones.

As will be seen in chapter six of this study, complex ethnic and political differences within Iraqi populations are generally ignored, and ‘the Iraqi people’ are discussed as though they were an orderly and unified nation. When considered as sister city partners, Iraqis who are already open to Western perspectives, and in particular, their *children*, stand discursively for the entire population of that devastated country, thereby sidelining dissenting and hostile Iraqi perspectives. In sister city discourses involving Palestinian cities, however, the ambiguous status of Hamas as both a local authority and a proscribed terrorist organisation is typically reacted to defensively, but not explored in any analytical depth, with the result that the residents of Palestinian cities are discursively homogenised as terrorist sympathisers. In this scenario, it is moderate and peace loving Palestinians and *their* children whose perspectives and needs are often marginalised.

Symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnár, 2002) or ‘mental fences’ (Beck and Cronin, 2006:5) thus exclude ‘Palestinians’ from the structured international spaces of hospitality provided by sister city relationships, while freely admitting ‘Iraqis’ who are understood to be open to the American government’s definition of their own situation. This disparate and unequal positioning of Iraqi and Palestinian cities as sister city partners calls for sociological explanation. Why and how do Palestinian cities come to be constituted as ‘out of bounds’ for sister city peace relationships? Why and how do Iraqi cities come to be so easily accepted? Within the context of the global war on terror, inferences may be drawn as to the reasons for the apparent

singling out of Palestinians for rejection as sister city partners. These include the ‘malignant positioning’ (Sabat, 2003) of Muslims in Western cultural traditions and the fear of importing terrorist violence from conflict zones into peaceful Western cities. However, such explanations do not explain the apparent immunity of Iraqis to such obstacles. As socially constructed realities with global consequences, sister city peace relationships and proposals involving Palestinian and Iraqi cities offer the sociological researcher an opportunity to uncover the personal and collective meanings behind these discrepancies, and the processes through which they are translated into structures of social inclusion and exclusion at the local/international interface. The data acquisition and analysis for the present study were accordingly guided by five research questions.

- 1 Why are sister city relationships with objectively dangerous Iraqi cities accepted uncritically at the local scale, while proposed partnerships with similarly dangerous Palestinian cities are vehemently opposed?
- 2 Through what processes are the meanings given to these cities, and to the people who live in them, translated into the structural inequality of formal acceptance or rejection?
- 3 What do the answers to these questions reveal as to the capacity of sister city relationships to facilitate peace building under conditions of severe, ongoing geopolitical conflict?
- 4 How do these findings relate to broader sister city practices?
- 5 What implications do they have for policy and practice in local governance?

Methods and methodology

Sister city relationships are social constructions that are brought into existence and sustained through the exchange of symbolic meaning. In fact, apart from the limited amount of time spent in interactions between embodied officials,

citizen volunteers and students, sister city relationships exist *primarily* in discursive space, in the form of mediated images, texts and spoken words. I therefore employ a qualitative methodology in this study, in order to access those meanings, and to reveal the processes through which they are translated into structures of inequality at the level of local civic engagement. Since language is the primary means of conveying social meaning, my principal focus is on the language used by both supporters and opponents of sister city relationships to explain and justify the stance they have taken, and how that language operates to challenge or reinforce symbolic boundaries.

Lamont and Molnar (2002) call attention to the importance of differentiating between *symbolic* and *social* boundaries when attempting to explain social processes of change and continuity. Symbolic boundaries, they explain, “are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space, ...tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality” 2002:168). They are mediating devices; definitions of reality through which status and resources, such as those provided by formalised sister city relationships, come to be unequally distributed. Attention to symbolic boundaries allows social scientists to examine the dynamics of social exclusion in process, as interest groups “compete in the production, diffusion, and institutionalization of alternative systems and principles of classifications”. Social boundaries, on the other hand, are “objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities” (2002:168). Lamont and Molnár (2002) note that

(o)nly when symbolic boundaries are widely agreed upon can they take on a constraining character and pattern social interaction in important ways. Moreover, only then can they become social boundaries, i.e., translate, for instance, into identifiable patterns of social exclusion ... But symbolic and social boundaries should be viewed as equally real: The former exist at the intersubjective level whereas the latter manifest themselves as groupings of individuals. At the causal level, symbolic boundaries can be thought of as a necessary but insufficient condition for the existence of social boundaries (2002:169).

Glaeser (2000, cited in Lamont and Molnár, 2002: 184) identifies one of the most basic rhetorical tools of boundary work as the metaphor. Metaphors are “the very stuff of worlds promised or denied” (Miller, 2006:63). They structure and shape discourse (Turner, interviewed by Underhill, 2001), forming “systems that select, emphasise and organise” human experience (Lunt, 2005). Since the name given to sister city relationships is explicitly predicated on the metaphor of human sisters, attention to the usage and consequences of metaphors constitutes the second methodological focus of this study. The English form of the word ‘metaphor’ comes from the Greek word *metapherein*, which means to carry or transfer from one place to another. In metaphorical language, what is being transferred is meaning (Miller, 1979:73).

Metaphors are cognitive constructs that enable complex phenomena to be understood in terms of objects and experiences that are simpler and more familiar (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). In the terminology of the phenomenologist Schutz (cited in Knoblauch, 1999), they are ‘typifications’; expressions of the ‘natural attitude’, which draw upon the ‘common stocks of knowledge’ that build up over time within particular cultures. Metaphors have

intuitive appeal, as they invoke reassuringly familiar understandings of people, places, and the relationships between them. They can benefit human subjects by facilitating their understanding of society and social processes (Urry, 2000) and by allowing conceptual access to provinces of meaning, such as politics, that transcend the world of everyday life (Schutz, 1973, cited in Miller, 1979:1979). They can also serve to exclude particular aspects of the social world from awareness, by encouraging some thoughts and discouraging others (Cresswell, 1997). Metaphors play a primary role in constituting socio-political space. By defining “what and who belong where” in metaphoric terms, governments, interest groups and the media naturalise particular practices of exclusion, focusing on the “out of placeness” of particular people and actions (1997:334).

Metaphor effects can extend to macro level processes of political, cultural and economic change. In order to understand the efficacy of a particular metaphor, it is necessary to understand the commonplace cultural meanings associated with the source domain (Zashin and Chapman, 1974), from which it is derived. Metaphoric speech becomes deontic speech – the language of obligation and permission (Forrester, 1989:1) – through the recognition of entailments, or expectations of action, arising from the meaning of the original source. As Lakoff and Johnson (2001) explain, metaphors can

sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set goals. For example ... if love is madness, I do not concentrate on what I have to do to maintain it. But if it is work, then it requires activity, and if it is a work of art, it requires a very special *kind* of activity, and if it is collaborative, then it is even further restricted and specified ... If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the

perceptions and actions that they system gives rise to. Much of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones. For example, the Westernization of cultures throughout the world is partly a matter of introducing TIME IS MONEY into those cultures (2001: 130-131, emphasis in original).

Symbolic boundaries are ‘built in’ to the concept of sister city relationships, in the form of entailments transferred from the source domain of kinship. The name chosen for this loosely structured ‘movement’ has thus been crucial in determining how it is perceived and operates. As Grossman (1994) enquires, “(w)hy do cities of the world call one another sister, if not for love and peace?”

Of mixed benefit to the communicative value of the ‘sister’ metaphor, however, is the fact that cultural perceptions regarding the appropriate role of sisters vary widely between societies and, over time, within societies as well. Metaphors that go with the grain of contemporary experience are more rhetorically persuasive (Urry, 2000:22), and the capacity of the sister city metaphor to incorporate changing ideologies of the family and other intimate relationships affords it a resonance and immediacy in popular discourses. In a confusion of “muddled metaphors” (Lloyd, 2005), sister city personifications of romantic attachments and marriages between sisters reflect the decreased salience of family obligations and the increasing preoccupation with romantic intimacy in the late modern world (see Giddens, 1991, Beck, and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). City ‘siblings’ initially connected through a mutual commitment to provide support are now said to fall in love (Munro, 2004), have affairs (Masser, 2004) and get married (Wilkinson, 2003). The emergent phenomenon of metonymic sister city ‘weddings’ discussed in chapter seven of this study provides a concrete example of this trend.

As with their human counterparts, sister city bonds that prove onerous on any dimension can always be discarded. Sister city ‘marriages’, like the ‘pure relationships’ described by Giddens (1993), are now ‘until further notice’, as illustrated by a directive from a Sister Cities International conference: “At times divorce is the right alternative to take in a sister-cities relationship”, delegates are advised. “Divorce is appropriate when: the sister city has reduced/disappeared, the political climate has changed, there is open animosity amongst members and when there is absolutely no interest in the program. If divorce is the answer, be sure to do it in writing and let SCI national office know of the split” (Sister Cities International, 2001). Possibilities for the unilateral termination by city councils of sister city relationships that are economically unrewarding, become controversial, lose community support or are otherwise problematic are thus afforded popular legitimacy (see Bauman, 1994: 32).

Metaphors of kinship regulate patterns of emotional attachment in all societies, and those that harness them profit from their power (Verdery, 1999). Rigney (2001) notes that “(i)n political rhetoric, kinship metaphors, both vertical and horizontal, are frequently mobilized to strengthen bonds of group solidarity, as when we refer to the nation-state as the “motherland” (or in Germany, the “fatherland”), or when diplomats invoke the image of a “family of nations”. Kinship metaphors are invoked “on behalf of “universal brotherhood,” the “power of sisterhood,” or concern for the wellbeing of the “human family” (2001:16). In such cases, the claimed kinship takes fictive form. Shipton (1997:186) defines fictive kinship as ‘the creative imprecision

by which an idiom of relatedness is used to strengthen an image or feeling of identification between two or more persons or beings', noting that

(s)ome of the most creative and ramified inventions in kin idiom are found in some of the societies where biological families are most fragmented, and perhaps most lacking in life altogether, suggesting a vacuum-filling function. Fictive kinship can provide art, humor or worldly gain. But it points to deep, and sometimes subtle, human needs. The ubiquity and variety of fictive kinship testify to the power of close kin and family over the human psyche, and of analogy and metaphor over the human imagination (1997:187).

As one board member expressed her own city's connections to its 'sisters', "(w)e see them as our extended family. They're in trouble, and we need to find out what they need and how we can help them, just like you do when you have a relative in another state who's in trouble" (Misterek, 2008; see also *Duluth Sister Cities Commission*, 2004). The sister cities metaphor conveys not only kinship but also feminine gender, leading to specific normative entailments of caring, nurturance and decorous behaviour. As Potts (2002) observes,

in geography, those spaces or places known as "nation, regions, cities, and the home" are depicted as feminine; in architecture, buildings are personified as female (Best, 1995, 181). Similarly, in popular idiom we speak of 'sister' cities; cars and ships are referred to by female pronouns, and nature is feminized.

The seemingly 'natural' association between sororal relations and peace is also explicit in the comments of Afghan Studies scholar G. Rauf Roashan (2002), who, in support of a proposal for a sister city relationship between Fremont, California and Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, argues that

Fremont could become a wonderful sister to Kabul. The sisters could love each other beyond the ordinary bonds of sister-city relationships. Afghanistan today needs sisters and brothers from the world community to extend their hands of help to it especially in its day of need. She needs help, not for war, but for peace and development and for this she needs sisters.

On a more quotidian note, Daley (interviewed by Wilkinson, 2003) reflects that “there’s a certain warmth involved in having it being called a sister city. I think there is something about sisterhood that expresses a kind of closeness, a kind of intimacy, a kind of willingness to share secrets, things like that, that maybe is implied more by a feminine description”.

Assumptions of semantic intersubjectivity across cultures can, however, lead to communicative disjuncture, particularly in relation to issues of power. Brady (2002) explains that the Western conceptualisation of “sister cities” as denoting equals cannot be translated directly into Chinese, for example, in which there is no word for sisters who are equal. There are older and younger sisters, and the power relationship between them is clear. The term used for international urban partnerships in Chinese is most accurately translated as ‘friendship cities’, but this metaphor is also problematic in political terms. It is much utilised by the Communist party in China, but denotes a purely strategic relationship and lacks any suggestion of warm or intimate personal relations (Brady, 2002). Furthermore, as Kopytoff (1982:221, citing Kopytoff and Miers, 1977) explains, “to modern Westerners the kinship metaphor suggests nurture and closeness; in Africa, and elsewhere, it conveys authority and subordination”. City officials from non-Western cultures are therefore required

to make ‘concessions to Western habits of mind’ (MacGaffey, 2005:196) when they speak or write about sister city relationships.

As a cognitive as well as affective accomplishment, bestowing fictive kinship upon particular others is an outcome of processes of ‘boundary work’ (Gieryn, 1983) and categorisation. Driving such processes is a desire to avoid boundary ambiguity (Boss and Greenberg, 2004), by seeking answers to the pivotal questions: “which international urban others can be part of our city, and on what basis can they be part of it?” For some international cities, the answers signal acceptance and inclusion, while for others they convey rejection and exclusion. In both instances, the metaphoric classification is ‘real in its consequences’ (Thomas, 1928, cited in Link *et al*, 1999) for the way particular groups are to be treated. The acceptance or rejection of sister city proposals sends clear messages of trust, acceptance and entitlement to hospitality to the people of some cities, and opposite messages to rejected others. The processes through which these disparate outcomes are generated form the primary analytical focus of this thesis.

While the methodology for the study was guided by the nature of the sociological ‘puzzle’ to be solved, the methods I employed were determined by more logistical and serendipitous developments. “Research questions”, as noted by Henderson (1999) “are not static but messy. Since they are connected to the experiences and networks of the researcher, they change as the investigation evolves” (1999:vii). Such was the case with this project. The inspiration for the thesis topic in its present form arose from my interest in news coverage of a controversial proposal put forward in 2004, for a sister city relationship between the city of Madison in the American state of Wisconsin,

and Rafah, a war-torn Palestinian city on the Gaza strip. Until that point, I had been researching sister city relationships between my home city of Hobart, Australia, and cities in Italy and Japan, but the implications of the Madison debate for the capacity of sister city relationships to build peace across significant geopolitical difference marked sister city proposals between Western and Middle Eastern cities as a more interesting and compelling area of study. As will be seen in chapter three, the Madison-Rafah proposal was debated in a city renowned for the progressive political stance it had historically taken on human rights issues, and the proposal itself had been widely supported in the Madison community. After attracting a level of local opposition that was unprecedented in its intensity and effect, however, the proposal was defeated. The extensive coverage of the Madison debate in the electronic media alone⁴ might have provided ample data for a dissertation based on discourse analysis, but I was reluctant to take that path, since I wanted to access the deeper meanings that only a more direct engagement with participants could provide.

Two subsequent developments in Western-Palestinian sister city relations rendered the topic more practicable as a focus of study for an Australian researcher operating under financial and temporal constraints. The first was the videorecording and subsequent online posting of a public meeting held in 2007 in the American city of Olympia, Washington State, to decide the outcome of a proposed sister city relationship with Rafah, the same Palestinian city that had been rejected three years earlier by the city council of Madison. Tuan (1994) notes that documented speech is likely to be public speech, and

⁴ An archive of media coverage of this debate is available at <http://madisonrafah.org/blog1/projects/sister-city-debate/>

this is the case with this video recorded public hearing, which constitutes a historical record, or ‘time capsule’ of public sentiment towards the Middle East in a particular American city in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Lyons, 2007). The audiovisual access it conferred also provided a rare opportunity to observe the more personal emotional expressions and demeanours of participants, as well as to hear the perspectives they were expressing. The video was the source of the empirical data for my analysis of the Olympia-Rafah proposal in chapter three, using the method of non-participant observation. This simple but useful method involves the sociologist intently watching social action, but taking no part in that action (Stephens, Leach, Taggart and Jones 1998:107). Observation as an ‘unobtrusive method’ (Kelleher, 1993) brings both advantages and disadvantages to the research process. It enables access to actual rather than reported behaviour, is safe for both researcher and researched, does not disrupt others, is easily repeatable, easily accessed and inexpensive. Disadvantages can include the fact that publicly available records may be distorted to hide information or give a particular impression, may privilege the perspective of the observer rather than the meanings given by the actors themselves and selective recording of data (Kelleher, 1993:5-6). However the highly structured format of the public hearing placed clear constraints on interpretive licence, rendering the video evidence no more susceptible to such pitfalls than any other qualitative resource. At the time of writing, the video of the meeting still exists as a public record available to any researcher who wishes to compare his or her own interpretation with the one proffered in my analysis.

I was grateful for the opportunity to replay this video several times, so that I would not overlook important data, but I found the process something of a double-edged sword. As Gilbert (2000) observes, engaging with the subjective life experiences of subjects in the course of qualitative research can have an emotional impact on researchers, particularly with respect to sensitive topics. In my personal experience, repeated attention to testimonies in which some Olympia residents were able to take advantage of the formal structure and civility norms of the public hearing to express ignorant, bigoted or racist views freely and without interruption, was an emotionally wearing aspect of this research. As with the qualitative interviews subsequently conducted in Sydney, I transcribed and later analysed the testimonies from the hearing, in order to identify recurring themes in ‘definitions of the situation’ expressed by supporters and opponents of the sister city proposal. I then compared these frames with the explanations given by council members for their final votes, in order to ascertain which citizen-generated definitions had most resonated with those of the panel members and had consequently most effectively shaped the outcome of the hearing.

The second development was another public debate that arose later in the same year, in two inner-west municipalities of Sydney, capital of the Australian state of New South Wales. The municipality of Marrickville had announced its intention to formalise a long-standing sister city project with the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, and the neighbouring municipality of Leichhardt had accepted in principle a proposal to sister with the Palestinian city of Hebron. The mainstream media coverage of these proposals drew on many of the same objections that had derailed the Madison and Olympia proposals,

portraying them as highly divisive, contentious and offensive to Jewish residents of Sydney. The proximity of the location of the Sydney debate provided an opportunity for me to delve more deeply into the interpretations of the issue held by the actual social actors involved, most of whom were high profile public figures. I contacted public officials from the Leichhardt and Marrickville councils by telephone and explained the nature of my interest in the projects. They, in turn, suggested the names of key representatives of citizen groups who might be interested in participating in my research. I also directly contacted the CEO of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, Mr. Vic Alhadeff, whose strong opposition to both proposals had been widely disseminated through mainstream news media coverage. I then conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with a small representative sample of participants from each of the social groups involved. These were the serving mayors of both municipalities, the Marrickville councillor who had proposed the Bethlehem relationship, a spokesperson for the Leichhardt group that had proposed the Hebron relationship, two other representatives of citizen groups and Mr. Alhadeff himself. I offered all interview participants the option of having their responses recorded under pseudonyms, and all chose to have their real names recorded. I have used complete names when reproducing and analysing the responses of public officials, but the first names only of volunteers. Although each of the volunteers had already spoken publicly about her views, I classified their contributions as more 'private' than those of public figures who were enacting institutional roles, so decided to convey their identities less explicitly. Despite the limited size of the sample, my analysis of the Marrickville and Leichhardt interviews in chapters four and five

respectively uncovers interpretations that are far more ambiguous and nuanced than those suggested by media representations.

For the Western-to-Palestinian sister city proposals addressed in this study, the actions of city-based representatives of the pro-Israeli lobby formed an important obstacle to success. The ongoing geopolitical conflict in the Middle East is a compelling and emotionally charged issue, and my attention was often directed during the course of data collection, by both participants and news media, towards the legitimacy or otherwise of the Israeli presence in Palestine and of the Palestinian resistance to that presence. The stance I adopt in this study is normative to the extent of my contention that if sister city relationships are to function as peace building entities at all, they must be applicable impartially, and be seen to be applicable impartially, in all cases. If Palestinian cities are consistently excluded in practice, then, in my estimation, the legitimacy of the entire movement is compromised. I do not, however, take a normative stance on the substantive issue of the Middle East conflict, or on the political perspectives of those who do, since the target of my analysis is the sister city model. The interpretive theoretical framework adopted in this study holds that human actors behave towards the world in terms of the meanings that the world holds for them. It is therefore to be expected that social actors who identify strongly with Palestinian or Israeli interests will respectively support or oppose proposals to link their city in fictive kinship with a city that is in conflict with the Israeli state. In order to function effectively as a vehicle for peace building under conditions of serious existing conflict, however, sister city peace relationships, like any other institutionalised peace building program, must be strong enough to withstand local contestation. The data from

this study indicate that this condition is not met when the sister city model comes under pressure.

The next step in the project was a discourse analysis of partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi cities (see chapter six). Despite subsequent ambiguity as to their exact classification, these were introduced as sister city relationships by the First Lady of the United States in 2004 and later listed as such on the website of Sister Cities International. In line with the pragmatic position taken by Zelinsky (1991), I refer to these partnerships collectively as sister city relationships for purposes of convenience. Discourse analysis alone is not an ideal method for understanding mass participation in movements, in that it does not allow the researcher to access in any depth the meanings given by social actors to their participation. However it is a useful method of identifying patterns in meaning making conveyed through the symbolic medium of language, which, collectively, bring about structural and cultural change. For this chapter of the thesis, I used an internet search engine and library data bases to collect electronic and material publications and audiovisual material emanating from relevant organisations such as Sister Cities International and related charities, the websites of city councils throughout the United States and any other groups for which U.S-Iraqi sister city relationships were identified as an issue. The data revealed pervasive acceptance and support on the parts of American sister city peace actors of the interpretive frames suggested by the Bush administration when these initiatives were first put on the public agenda. Such unqualified and enthusiastic engagement with those frames suggested to me that they had resonated with particular needs and agendas of the American

public, rather than being the outcome of a top-down process of ideological ‘colonisation’.

The final stage (chapter seven) was to provide an overview of existing sister city relationships that are currently operating at less intense political and psychological registers than those involving controversial Middle Eastern cities. I included this chapter in order to locate the case studies of Palestinian and Iraqi focused projects within wider social processes shaping the direction of the sister cities movement. Three patterns were evident in general discourses of sister city relationships. Two of these were located at the international scale: the marginalisation of culture based relationships in favour of purely strategic economic partnerships, and the rise of romantic consumerist fantasies enacted through metonymic sister city weddings. The third pattern was observable specifically in Australian sister city discourses, and points to an embryonic but potentially problematic inclination towards nationalism in Australian sister city practices.

A sister cities model

The collection of data was the least challenging aspect of this thesis. Once this had been achieved, I was confronted with an obstacle that I suspect explains the paucity of research into sister city relationships identified by previous authors. Mascitelli and Chung (2008) record that, in conducting their own research into Australian sister city relationships with Chinese cities, they were “astonished at the sheer lack of academic and theoretical debate and one might add, the dismissal of these relationships as a force in furthering relationships between countries” (2008:204). The deficit of scholarly attention to sister city relationships has also been remarked upon by O’Toole (2000), Cremer, de

Bruin and Dupuis (2001) and de Villiers, de Coning and Smit (2006). The obstacle, as indicated in the preceding chapter and at the beginning of this one, was that sister city relationships as a collective object of study are ill-defined, highly flexible and contestable in meaning, and variable in application. As Amin and Thrift (2005:14) ask of cities in general, we can therefore enquire of sister city relationships in particular: “how can we grasp an object that is so internally inconsistent?”

As a first step in the process of setting up a tangible object of study, I constructed an analytical model of sister city peace focused relationships, which is theoretically and empirically supported and can be examined in operation under conditions of stress. The ‘sister cities peace model’ that I introduce can be understood as an institutionalised recipe for thought and action, composed of two distinct but interrelated components. These are the *concept*, which directs the way sister city relationships are to be thought about, and the *structure*, which sets out a framework for practice. The internal organisation of the sister cities model can be seen in Figure 1 below.

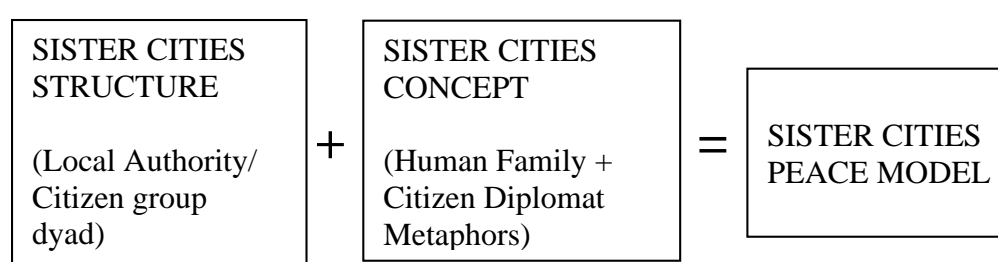


Figure 1. Internal organisation of the sister cities peace model

The sister cities structure

According to Sister Cities International, sister cities involve “cooperation between local government, businesses and a wide variety of citizen volunteers

and civil society or non-profit organisations” (Sister Cities International, n/d). They are “locally based and focus on the international interests and values that emerge from a local government’s collaboration with citizen volunteers. This occurs through an organization structure approved by the local government governing body” (Florida League of Cities Inc, 2005). While business involvement is a characteristic of relationships directed primarily toward economic development, in sister city projects specifically aimed at peace building the structure is more basic, comprising an interactive dyad of local authorities and various citizen groups. This is the structure invoked in discourses of sister cities that include any reference to their role as peace building agents, and is the most successful in practice, in terms of its demonstrated capacity to facilitate reciprocity, friendship and understanding across cultures (Smith, 1990).

The sister cities structure has particular normative implications, which serve to regularise the division of labour and authority within the dyad. Sister Cities International (SCI) reports that the interaction “combines public sector leadership with the grassroots energy, creativity and commitment from volunteer citizens who are then empowered to make sister cities an integral part of the fabric of their community” (SCI Strategic Plan, 2002-2006). As O’Toole (2001:7) observes, “(i)t is the partnership between community and local government that ultimately gives SCTR legitimacy in the eyes of the local electorate”. According to SCI’s (n/d) publication ‘Four decades of Progress and Achievement’, it is also the most potent structure for building a more just world.

[If] this is going to be a better world, if there is going to be a better standard of living, if there is to be some relief from human suffering, expanded opportunities for the young, security for the aged, increased health care for the sick, better education for the children of the world—it will be primarily because the citizens and their local governments across the world have insisted upon it, have given leadership, and have mobilized the resources that are available to assure a better life.

A distinctive feature of sister city partnerships is that they are formalised through agreements signed by the mayors of the two municipalities involved.

In Western countries with relatively egalitarian cultural norms, such as the United States and Australia, they are managed at the local level as structured interactions between city councils and citizen groups as outlined above.

However in countries where institutionalised authority and hierarchy are highly valued, it is the norm for citizen groups not to be directly involved in decision making processes (Sister Cities International, n/d). This discrepancy can generate both ideological and structural asymmetry in relationships between Australian or American cities and their counterparts in many other countries, as the perspectives of citizen volunteers may only be communicated in indirect or mediated form to the international partner.

The sister cities concept

The sister cities concept is the more complex component of the model, in that it provides a cognitive and moral guide for social action. It comprises a conceptual blend⁵ of two metaphoric constructs, both of which effect collective reclassifications of particular international urban others within local social

⁵ In adopting this term, I do not attempt to apply the complex theoretical framework of conceptual blending developed in the field of cognitive linguistics (for example, by Turner, 2007, Fauconnier and Turner, 2008). I simply assert that the two metaphors normally combine in the public imaginary in such a way as to avoid cognitive dissonance.

imaginaries. Reflecting on citizen mobilisation through sister city partnerships, Alger (1987) notes that “there do seem to be two widespread motivations. One is some kind of common identity, we might call it species identity, with people in other parts of the world. A second is the belief that direct communication with people in other countries breeds understanding and contributes to peace” (1987:380). I identify these motivations more specifically in terms of the two principal metaphors that drive them in current sister city practices. The first of these, the human family metaphor, has universal (global) application. It is derived from the domestic sphere and provides a culturally embedded system of meaning, or ‘plausibility structure’ (Berger, 1967), for the transformation of unrelated others into fictive kin. The second, the citizen diplomat metaphor, is particular (national) in application and located in the public sphere. It derives from the people to people frame introduced by Eisenhower, and serves to discursively transform ordinary urban populations into authoritative agents of the state, with a putative power to influence events on the world stage.

The human family metaphor

The United Nations ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (1948) begins with a statement that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. The generic ‘human family’ metaphor expresses an ideological orientation towards all of humankind as intrinsically worthy, fundamentally similar, and necessarily interconnected. It encompasses variants such ‘global community’, as well as metaphoric allusions to more specific kinship roles such as sister or brother, wife or husband, mother or father. While nuclear family metaphors are more particular in application,

the idea is that individual partnerships are embedded within wider social networks, as in the case of the human 'extended family'. This notion of a 'natural' and essentialised human connectivity is expressed in the "Sister Cities: We Are One" song, which was written for Sister City International's thirtieth anniversary conference in Los Angeles in 1986, where it was performed by the popular singer John Denver. A selection from the song is sufficient to convey the overall sentiment of joyous celebration of the unity of humanity as a form of species identity.

We're all one dream,
One voice of hope
Hope for tomorrow
We're all one life
One gift of love
One song forever

Sister cities, brother nations
Hand in hand in celebration
Sister cities, brother countries
One peaceful world, one human nation
Yes, we are one.
(Denver and Darnell, 1986)

The human family metaphor infuses civic participation with more affectively compelling meanings drawn from domestic lifeworlds. In the words of the Mayor of Austin, Carole McClellan (1981),

this is what the world is all about: realizing that we are all of the human family - all sisters and brothers who simply are born in different locations. In the basics we are the same, with only minor differences to add a spice to life. As Sister Cities, Saltillo and Austin will always share the same concerns... The Sister Cities organization enables us to more easily share our problems -- but better still -- to share our solutions.

Understanding communication across difference in terms of kin-based reciprocity and mutual support frames sister city activities as rational as well as expressive endeavours. Aguilera (2003), for example, argues that “(s)ister cities gives our peoples a way to link our communities at a grassroots level. When we work together we have the greatest chance to discover our mutual interests are greater than our differences as we work to advance the welfare of the whole human family”. The website of Project Gettysburg León (2009), a sister city partnership between people in the South Central Pennsylvania Region and the people of León, Nicaragua, notes that the organisation “affirms a shared membership in one human family and a commitment to work for peace and justice”. The human family metaphor can thus operate as a powerful incentive for productive cooperation on a global scale. As a founding member of the Modesto Sister Cities International Khmelnitskiy Committee remarked, “(e)ither we understand that we are all on the same planet earth and learn to work together or the future of the human family is dismal (Driskill, 2007). However the same metaphor can also inspire highly romantic representations of people to people connections that can steer participants’ understandings of their engagement towards affective mystification and ‘magical thinking’, as seen in the following quote from a member of the US-Cuba Sister Cities Association.

Today a great gulf divides the Cuban and American governments. Jagged peaks and barrier reefs bar our closer relations. Rather than crashing through or around the barriers, however, which we have long been attempting through politics and force, together ...we embark on another, more constructive way. We will flood that abyss with so much goodwill, so many positive ideas and concrete actions that our joint efforts will lift us above the peaks and snags of

petty politics and carry us across the waters into each other's open arms. We must continue this new-found positive relationship even though our government, even though Sister Cities International, cannot at this time approve the relationship. Like Romeo and Juliet, we shall continue our unblessed affair, despite the efforts of certain parental authority figures, to keep us apart. But unlike the star-crossed lovers of medieval times, however, our sister cities must strive to bring about reconciliation between our families before more tragedy occurs, rather than afterwards. This is the true meaning of the sister city ideal - helping each other, sharing ideas, problems and solutions (Higginbotham, 1999).

In a similar vein, the President of the U.S/Mexico Sister City Association reports back from a sister cities conference that he has learned that the true meaning of 'citizen diplomacy' is

the incorporation of the four basic concepts of respect, friendship brotherhood/sisterhood, and love into the work and play of our daily lives to promote peace and harmony within the human family throughout the world ... (T)he description of a deep sincere friendship is one soul shared by two bodies and these friendships will grow to be one community soul shared by two sister cities (Garcia, 2007:2).

This official's statement illustrates the conceptual blending of the human family metaphor with the second metaphor comprising the concept component of the model, that of the 'citizen diplomat'. In a speech by SCI President Sherman Banks (2003), however, the same blending process suggests more problematic connotations, as the intimation is that some members of the human family are 'bad', and that this is the result of a lack of proper awareness. Only by breaking through the false consciousness of 'the other' by means of their own, more morally worthy version of citizen diplomacy can 'good' members of the human family

bring these outcasts into the state of truth and enlightenment that they themselves already share. “In this world of globalization”, argues Banks,

change within the HUMAN FAMILY is truly the only absolute. In the most bleak of times there in lies the truth of how much we are alike but yet so different. Adali Stevenson said, “However dark the prospects, however intractable the opposition, however devious and mendacious the diplomacy of our opponents, we ourselves have to carry so clear and intense a picture of our common humanity that we see the brother beneath the enemy and snatch at every opportunity to break through to his reason and his conscience, and, indeed, his enlightened self.” ... Through the spirit of attaining or projecting to ultimate truth within the human family can we hope to have the kind of unequaled opportunity for people of all ages, races and ethnicities to experience and exercise their citizen diplomacy by creating and strengthening partnerships with NGOs in the ever growing age of globalization (Banks, 2003, emphasis in original).

This national scale framing of the global crisis of peacelessness, and the consequences of harnessing the metaphor of citizen diplomacy in its cause, are explored in chapter six of this study.

The citizen diplomat metaphor

‘Citizen diplomat’ is a metaphorical concept rather than a literal description, since ordinary citizens possess none of the power, status, authority or resources of official diplomatic staff. Furthermore, the semantic ambiguity of the word ‘diplomat’ bestows coherence and legitimacy on the curious notion that activity conducted on behalf of the state can be inherently non-political. The online dictionary resource *Dictionary.com* lists the following attributes of a diplomat.

1. a person appointed by a national government to conduct official negotiations and maintain political, economic, and social relations with another country or countries.
2. a person who is tactful and skillful in managing delicate situations, handling people, etc.

As Garrety and Badham (1999) observe, the terms ‘politics’ and ‘political’ are highly normative and fraught with ambiguity. Eliasoph (1999) details the discomfort experienced by ordinary Americans over ambiguous boundaries between the private and the public, as they struggle to describe their own acts of political resistance in apolitical terms. Similarly, Lofland (1993) demonstrates how politeness norms in the American sister city peace movement of the 1980s served to marginalise political discussion in sister city discourses. Anna Post, great-great-granddaughter of the popular etiquette advisor, Emily Post, is currently engaged in reinforcing the message that political discussion can be a minefield for polite American women seeking to ‘manage delicate situations’. In an interview entitled ‘Etiquette for the Electorette’ (2007), she offers the following reassuring advice to a concerned contributor.

CJP: When talking about things that are very emotional, like the war or abortion or even some of the candidates, if somebody says something that you don’t agree with, should you say something that’s honest, something that’s polite, or can you do both at the same time?

AP: You can do both at the same time. A mild reply might be, “OK, I hadn’t thought about it like that before.” You’re not accepting their opinion. You are letting them know that you heard it and that you’re considering it, but that you’re not pursuing an argument. That’s one out. Another one is, “I’m sorry, I guess I just disagree.” And with both of those, just find a new topic. An

argument takes two people, and if you choose not to participate, it's going to shut it down pretty quickly.

Kinship metaphors are common to all cultures, albeit in diverse applications, but the citizen diplomat metaphor is a typically American phenomenon, and is less commonly invoked directly in Australian sister city discourses. While for Kavaloski (1990), citizen diplomacy is clearly a 'state-centric' construction, Krotz (207:406) calls attention to the ambiguity of the term, noting that in the context of sister cities, it "is suggestive that such activity somehow falls between state and society. Yet, such activity also does not properly belong to either, and 'diplomacy' connotes public officials representing their states".

When first introduced into the American popular consciousness through Eisenhower's people to people program, the concept of citizen diplomacy was framed as an *opportunity* for ordinary citizens to participate in international affairs. As described by Madden, quoted in Kurata (2008), "(t)he basic concept was to get government and formal diplomacy out of the way and let ordinary citizens travel abroad, meet other ordinary citizens, walk the streets, see their cultural sites, eat their food, and the one thing that they'll realize is that we're all the same. We might have some differences of opinion, but we have more in common than differences". The conceptual blend of the citizen diplomat and human family metaphors illustrated in statements such as this was later to provide a bridging mechanism that enabled citizen diplomacy to be reframed as an *obligation* to protect the reputation of the United States government in the context of the war in Iraq. As a result, the universal impulses of American sister city peace actors were engulfed by nationalist sympathies, as I argue in chapter six.

The boundary object concept

Having produced an analytical model, I next sought to identify the specific outcome sought by sister city peace actors. The question posed was: ‘What exactly are people trying to achieve when they set up a sister city peace relationship?’ In keeping with the characteristic vagueness of sister city discourses, the primary goal of the movement is frequently cited as ‘building peace through understanding’, but the processes through which understanding translates into peaceful relations is not rendered explicit. Furthermore, history is replete with instances of human individuals and populations living in close proximity and understanding each other well, but not liking or approving of what they understand. How, then, might positive and productive understanding between people from diverse cultural and political perspectives be facilitated by means of sister city relationships? A broad sweep of the sociological literature on communication across difference revealed a promising pathway in the form of Star and Griesemer’s (1989) analytical concept of the ‘boundary object’. A product of symbolic interactionist theory, the concept of the boundary object highlights the importance of processes of meaning and knowledge construction for the success of cooperative endeavours between diverse social actors. Introduced by Star and Griesemer (1989) within the sociology of science and technology, the concept has since been taken up and developed in a wide cross-disciplinary literature.

An ‘object’ in the general sense can be “anything that can be indicated, anything that is pointed to or referred to” (Blumer, 1967:10). It might be a concrete entity, such as a book or a river, or an abstraction, such as a country, regulation or idea. Objects routinely mediate human experience (Knorr Cetina, 1997) and this process may be inimical to or supportive of human well-being.

It may for example, undermine the integrity of interpersonal bonds, as in the case of consumption-based romantic attachments (Illouz, 1997), but in other contexts, such as with human relationships with the natural world, it can serve to situate, stabilise and connect the human subject (Knorr Cetina, 1997).

Objects become boundary objects by virtue of their location at the intersection of two or more systems of meaning. As common referents that are broadly meaningful to all participants in a joint project, but in different ways for specific groups, they facilitate cooperation between interacting groups of people who hold discrepant understandings of what the project is about. A key feature of boundary objects is that they are “both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites” (Star and Griesemer, 1989:393). In order to be successful, only enough of the meaning of the boundary object needs to be shared to make it recognisable, thereby orientating all participants to the task at hand.

Boundary objects “have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation” (Star and Griesemer, 1989:393). As Buzelin (2007) citing Latour (1986) explains, the term ‘translation’ “refers to a process of mediation, of ‘interpretation’ of objectives, expressed in the ‘languages’ of the different intermediaries engaged in a project/process of innovation – intermediaries who, at the beginning, do not necessarily have the same points of view or interests. It refers to the strategies that make it possible for objectives to change and evolve, ensuring the participation of the intermediaries and the continuation of the project” (2007:48).

Cooperative engagement around a boundary object can therefore drive creativity and innovation, since the outcomes sought are understanding and perspective taking, which facilitate problem solving across meaning systems, rather than consensus, which maintains the status quo. As common denominators, boundary objects can also serve as tools for the creation and management of new forms of identity that allow for shared and dual loyalties (Hepsø, 2008). They frame, stabilise and strengthen relationships between disparate social actors (Harvey 2006) by bridging the interpretive boundaries that would otherwise divide them. Everyone involved can then “get behind the boundary object and work together toward some goal” (Gieryn, 1995, cited in Frost, Reich and Fujisaki, 2002:91).

The creation of boundary objects is therefore of central importance for the development and maintenance of coherence in projects where diverse interests intersect (Star and Griesemer, 1989). Examples of boundary objects identified in the cross-disciplinary literature include animals (Star and Griesemer, 1989) maps (Roth, 1995), a multi-causal model used in epidemiology (Shim, 2002), musical scores (Winget, 2007), the category of rare diseases (Huyard, 2009) and the concepts of property (Lash, 2009) and ecological modernization (Giorgi and Redclift, 2000). Boundary objects may have an existence prior to and independent of human involvement, as in Goodwin’s (2005) study of scientists from separate fields who work on, with and in the sea, or may be consciously set up in specific problem solving contexts, as in the use of a controlled vocabulary constructed to coordinate patient care in a multidisciplinary team of physicians (Sampalli, Shepherd and Fox, 2009). Alternatively, they may operate obliquely by opening up otherwise

restricted communication pathways, as demonstrated by Gibbons' (2008) example of two people walking their dogs, whose shared interest in dogs establishes enough commonality for them to initiate a conversation, which may subsequently develop into a more lasting acquaintance, or even into a friendship.

The principles of the boundary object can be seen to operate in sister city relationships at both local and international scales. At the international scale, they may function in a way that is similar to Gibbons' (2008) dog-walking interlocutors, with the formalised relationship serving as a talking point and pathway to deeper and more extensive interactions. The relationship between Glen Falls (U.S.) and Saga City (Japan), for example, began with a visit from the Glen Falls team for the World Hot Air Balloon Championships, but soon developed into exchanges of officials, health care workers, firemen, business people, teachers, students, videos, artwork, pen pals and educational projects (Benson-Wright, 2003). Former war-time enemies, such as Japan and Australia, who remain culturally and politically distinct, whose sister city models differ and who hold different understandings of what sister city relationships are and should be for (O'Toole, 2001) have nevertheless achieved decades of successful exchange and cooperation between their respective urban governments and citizens. Cremer *et al's* (2001) notion of 'municipal-community entrepreneurship', through which the 'economic and social vibrancy' of cities can be mutually constituted and enhanced, is also suggestive of boundary object potential.

At the local scale, urban authorities may perceive particular relationships as tools for marketing the city on the global stage, thereby

expanding its potential for attracting international tourism and trade. For citizen groups involved in the same project, they may function more as a vehicle for fostering hybrid identities, as in the case of migrants reconnecting with their country and culture of origin. Still other citizen groups might engage with the same sister city relationship as a means of accessing a satisfying aesthetic experience from the comfort and safety of home (see for example, Privett, 2000). Theorising sister city relationships as boundary objects at both scales thus opens up new possibilities for understanding the processes that drive existing relationships, and provides a framework for establishing criteria of their success other than in terms of economic return. Existing sister city relationships are, however, outside the primary scope of this study, other than the brief discussion of alternative trends in chapter seven. Instead, I focus on the formative processes through which sister city peace-based proposals involving Western and Middle Eastern cities come to be consolidated as communicative spaces that are potentially hospitable to the formation of boundary objects, engulfed by nationalist sympathies, or banished from Western municipal agendas as unacceptable risks.

Setting up a boundary object

As noted above, boundary objects may arise as a consequence of human interaction, or be purposefully created as a focus for inter-group cooperation. In either case, a communicative space must be made available at the local level for international people-to-people contact to take place in the first instance. For sister city relationships, this is achieved via the acceptance of proposals put before councils and their subsequent ratification through formal agreements with the partner city. In instances where there is strong and uniform local

support for a proposal, and the council approached is sympathetic to the sister city model in principle, the setting up stage of the process is usually unproblematic. However, when proposals are locally contentious, or are appropriated at a higher scale in order to avoid contention, this stage can be derailed. The data from this study, drawn from an examination of four sister city projects with cities that are controversial by virtue of their geopolitical location, suggest that this derailment is likely to result in either of two alternative outcomes.

Building on the work of Lofland (1993), I term the first outcome a ‘consensus object’. Consensus objects are produced when potential dissent at national or international scales is glossed over, giving rise to a reassuring but erroneous sense that productive communication across meaningful difference is being achieved. As illustrated in chapter six of this study, a consensus object is generated at the national level and is enabled by ambiguity within the ‘concept’ component of the sister city model. The second is what Hilgartner (1992) calls a ‘risk object’, which is a thing, activity or situation that is perceived to be a source of danger. A risk object, as demonstrated in chapters three, four and five, is generated at the local scale, through ambiguity within the ‘structure’ component of the model. Consensus and risk objects are failed, polarised alternatives to what I argue is the best-case scenario for sister city relationships, the boundary object. While the management of risk is not a particularly salient issue in the formation of boundary objects, it is the *raison d’être* for the construction of both consensus and risk objects.

Since the division of ‘us’ and ‘them’ is the most basic and powerful of human categorisations (Bauman, 1995:52), each of the three outcomes has very

real consequences for the relational positioning of the particular international urban others under scrutiny. A consensus object is based on ‘we-images’ (Mennell, 1994), and reinforces connections based on similarity. It is formed by discursively sanitising and homogenising the difference of ‘the other’ and limiting the horizon of experience for those without and within (see McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). Inside the spaces of practice created by a consensus object, the aestheticised other is transformed and assimilated into ‘us’, and regulated, harmonious interactions prevail. At the other end of the continuum, a risk object also homogenises the difference of ‘the other’, but renders it unacceptably unknowable and threatening. Risky difference becomes a contaminant to be ejected from the body politic and from the agenda of local authorities. Within both consensus and risk objects, meaningful cultural and political difference is constituted as unacceptably risky. In the communicative space sustained by a flourishing boundary object, however, it is understood as an unthreatening *resource*, to be harnessed in the development of cooperative and creative endeavours. The relative location of these three outcomes is represented in Figure 2.

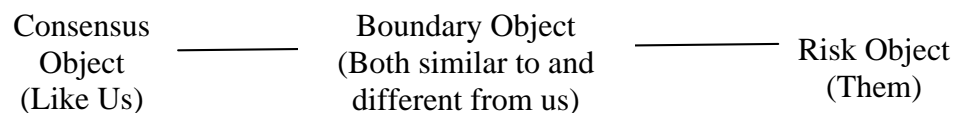


Figure 2. The consensus-boundary-risk object continuum

The consensus object

The concept of the consensus object derives from my observation of similarities between the consensus movements that arose in the United States during the 1980s and sister city relationships introduced by the Bush

administration in 2004. It is informed by, and builds upon, the critical theory of Lofland (1993), and to a lesser extent, that of Hollander (1991). Both authors are sceptical of attempts to harness the sister city model to express dissent for U.S. foreign policies during the Cold War period. Hollander (1991) is entirely dismissive of such endeavours, branding them expressions of a left-wing 'adversary culture' that routinely and naively adopts an oppositional stance to U.S. national foreign policy. While disagreeing with his normative framing, I find value in Hollander's critique of the inattention paid by Cold War sister city 'activists' to the significant ideological and structural obstacles that existed at the time to meaningful communication between the residents of American and Soviet cities. For Hollander (1991), assertions of sisterly solidarity between populations governed by warring or otherwise conflicted macro-political entities, based on similarities as generic as the sizes of their respective cities or their shared hopes for a safe future for their children, border on the surreal. In their determination to remain apolitical, thereby avoiding conflict of any kind, Cold War citizen diplomats, he claims, confined their conversations to innocuous topics such as foodways, families and sport. More to the point in enactments of U.S.-Soviet sister city relationships, argues Hollander, were absent correspondences in political ideologies and enabling civil structures that could have supported productive dialogue on topics more pertinent to the project of averting nuclear war.

Lofland (1993) takes a similar position, but defends it with an empirically grounded and more extensively theorised analysis of U.S.-Soviet and other peace-focused sister city relationships of the 1980s. For Lofland (1993), sister city relationships of the Cold War period were exemplars of a "disguised or

timid politics” that he categorises as ‘consensus movements’. Consensus movements are “a way of safely posturing as social movements without the problems of real conflict that genuine – that is, conflict movements – engender. Consensus movements are subterfuge conflict movements; they are derailed dissent, and the disguised rebellions of timid rebels” (1993:163). Lofland goes on to identify common features which helped to sustain sister city relationships as a consensus movement. These include:

- a kind of ideology, or “less-than-formalised collection of ideas” that emphasised similarity, celebrated unthreatening difference and maintained the grassroots and apolitical nature of people-to people contacts;
- an emotional motif of joy, upbeat cheerfulness, friendliness, optimism, graciousness and good will;
- core activists who were slightly more likely to be female, typically over forty, of upper middle class in lifestyle orientation, engaged in occupations related to religion, care of the home, teaching and small business, and disinclined to be associated with any confrontational position, including that of peace activism; and
- supportive and enthusiastic support from the general public and by a broad spectrum of mainline city groups.

Lofland (1992, 1993) notes that the success of these kinds of sister city relationships was partly an outcome of a wider social orientation, or socio-cultural ‘surge’ in the United States during the period in question. “Were city twinning the only instance of its type – the consensus movement – we could politically dismiss it as a flotsam of false consciousness, and social analytically file it away among the other minor eccentricities of human coping”, he argues. “But even the most cursory acquaintance with events of the nineteen eighties suggests that consensus movements were a major feature of the period”

(1993:183). All were animated, in Lofland's view, by four underlying assumptions:

- *Correct awareness causes positive social change.* This was the assumption that social problems are the result of ignorance or misunderstanding. Consensus movements were premised on magical thinking that cognitive change would miraculously translate into social change. As a result, their participants focused on changing awareness rather than conditions.
- *In a world of correct awareness, everyone lovingly resolves conflict.* This was the assumption that if people all over the world really got to know each other, each would realise the inherent goodness of the other and any differences of opinion could be resolved peacefully.
- *Other people are not our enemies, only our false awareness.* This was a movement that did not perceive or want to perceive any enemies other than false perceptions.
- *Traditional left and right politics are obsolete.* This assumption, together with the conceptual association of politics with confrontation, led to an insistence that no political statements were being made by the movement.

Lofland (1993) identifies specific, interrelated socio-cultural conditions in the 1980s which favoured the formation of consensus movements, as well as particular unintended consequences, which ultimately rendered them counterproductive for the purposes of reducing international conflict. In the interests of combining brevity and clarity, these are summarised in Table 2, below.

Social conditions that enable and sustain consensus movements	Unintended consequences of consensus movements
A dearth of culturally and organisationally developed political alternatives for addressing issues of social distress, combined with a widespread perception that "conflict, politics, and impersonal, distant relations are negative and to be avoided, as opposed to direct,	Consensus movements inhibit the development of oppositional movements that addressed the same purposes, by channelling off the human energies and talent that would otherwise have helped to drive them. The policies of the ruling class are thus left unchallenged and

personal interactions that achieve consensus and get beyond politics, which are positive” (1993:188)	therefore protected.
The rise of citizen diplomacy as an organising principle. This provided popular reassurance that the national government was ‘on the right track’, despite failed peace initiatives and the dismantling of public-spirited policy “virtually across the land” (1993:189), and a sense that ordinary citizens were doing something to help.	Participants come to believe that they have already made the world a better place just by participating. The consequences of consensus movements are even less significant for achieving social change than processes of ‘cooptation’ defined as “the process of adroitly absorbing dissident elements into leadership structures in a way that mitigates their impact on policy” (1993:186).
A dilemma posed by the tension between (a) an aversion of negativism, especially when expressed through moral indignation and the negative emotions of anger and fear, because of the psychic toll they imposed on participants, and (b) a desire to engage those caught up in negative thought patterns in order to counteract <i>their</i> negativism. Consensus movements neatly address this dilemma: “The impulse to resist noxious social arrangements persists, but attaches itself to an ideology that is bland, centrist and “mushy”, an ideology that has enough latent and implied substance to provide a sense of doing something relevant, but not enough to create overt conflict” (1993:191).	The extensive use of festivals and other spectacles of harmonious interaction by consensus movements. These can translate into “a mystified portrayal of social inequality and injustice, a “newspeak” rendering of social arrangements in which it becomes appropriate not only to feel that in doing nothing, one has done something, but to be joyous about it” (1993:187. At an intellectual level, social causation and social change are mystified, appearing to be merely matters of incorrect awareness, ignorance, or a lack of direct or personal relations.

Table 2. Causes and consequences of consensus movements in 1980s America (summarised from Lofland, 1993).

Applications of consensus *objects* take the timid politics of consensus movements to new extremes. Like consensus movements, consensus objects are products of particular historical conditions. Born of the late modern 'risk society' (Beck, 2001), they also adopt a goal of altered consciousness, but the alteration is meant to take place only in the perceptions of misguided international urban others. A consensus object is not a movement at all, since it is driven by no consistent goal or policy, but is rather a strategy designed to foster a compliant and ordered citizenry. In enactments of consensus objects, there is no dissent to derail, as potentially problematic civic input is bypassed altogether at the point of its creation by the state. The consensus object is superficially joyous in mood, but at its core lies a nervous anxiousness to please. Its focus is not on the other reflected in the eyes of the self, but on the self reflected in the eyes of the other. It is not 'grassroots' and spontaneous, but top-down, strategic and instrumental.

A consensus object is similar to a boundary object, in that it mobilises people from different social worlds - politicians and citizens - to work together at local, national and international scales. The difference is that all participants share the same definition of the situation, which has been pre-packaged and superimposed from above. Accordingly, I define a consensus object as a pseudo boundary object; a top-down, structured vehicle for public involvement and reassurance, which mimics a boundary object by creating a misleading impression that communication across meaningful difference is being achieved in the interests of positive social change. Its current and perhaps only incarnations so far, as I argue in chapter six, are U.S-Middle-Eastern 'sister city' relationships - national initiatives in which the sister cities model has

been appropriated in order to salvage American status, credibility and security in the wake of the U.S. led invasion of Iraq. These relationships provide local settings within which Lofland's (1993) 'polite protesters' can metamorphose confidently and comfortably into the role of 'polite carers', thereby mobilising the diffuse 'affections of the polity' in the service of the secure state (see Berezin, 2002).

The risk object

At the other end of the 'object continuum' represented in Figure 2 lies the risk object. As in the case of the boundary object, the concept of the risk object was developed within the sociology of science and technology, using a social constructionist theoretical framework. Introduced by Hilgartner (1992), risk objects are defined as things, activities or situations which are deemed to pose hazards, to be sources of danger; entities to which harmful consequences are conceptually attached (1992:40-41). Risk object theory draws attention to the social processes through which some entities come to be classified as potentially harmful or risky, while others, which could equally have been so classified, are not. In the context of the sister city relationships addressed in this study, risk object theory helps to explain why Palestinian cities are identified as hotbeds of terrorism and rejected as sister city partners, while Iraqi cities are spared such categorisation.

For Hilgartner (1992), the explanation for such discrepancies is to be found, not in the properties inherent in the entities themselves, but rather within the meaning systems through which risks are constructed. The selective classification of particular entities as risk objects has significant political implications, since powerful interest groups will inevitably mobilise to confer

legitimacy on the systemic suspicion of others, while directing attention away from their own activities as alternative sources of harm. The discursive production of risk is accordingly fraught with struggles over meaning: “Given the stakes – for organizations seeking to “disown” or “own” risks ... for policy, and for the careers of organizations and individuals – it is not surprising that intense conflict often surrounds efforts to construct risk objects (1992:43).

Hilgartner (1992:48) understands the creation of risk objects as

a two-way process, propelled by efforts to emplace risk objects within, and displace them from, sociotechnical networks. To emplace a risk object means to make the object, and its risks, into significant actors in a sociotechnical network. In other words, to emplace a risk object means to turn it into something to be reckoned with, something that is capable of influencing the future of the network. To displace a risk object means precisely the reverse: to strip the object, and its risks, of their significance, to neutralise them; to remove their capacity to influence the evolution of the network.

Since none of the risk objects examined in this thesis fits the typology of displaced risk objects, I henceforth confine my attention to emplaced risk objects, and the social processes through which they come to be emplaced. As Hilgartner (1992:49) explains,

(r)isk objects can be emplaced from two directions: First, they can be emplaced through construction; that is, entities get emplaced as risk objects if people (1) successfully define them as objects, and (2) successfully link them to harm. Second, risk objects can be emplaced through resistance to control; that is, risk objects can get emplaced if heterogeneous engineers cannot remove them from the system or enclose them in networks of control. Risk objects can also be emplaced if the networks of control that surround them come to be seen as unreliable (1992:49).

The identification of particular entities as ‘objects’ requires that they be marked out and differentiated from all the potential objects that hover in the background of human attention. This is a contingent process, explains Hilgartner, since “the world does not present itself pre-packaged into unambiguous and clearly-differentiated objects; On the contrary, the division of the world into objects is a conceptual achievement” (1992:42). Therefore, he argues,

(t)o assume that objects are simply waiting in the world to be perceived or defined as risky is fundamentally unsociological. Even less can one assume that linkages among objects simply exist ‘out there’ in reality. Nor should we assume, even implicitly, that definitions of objects or the linkages among them are invariant, either historically or across social groups. Finally, we cannot assume that the process of linking an object to a putative harm is independent of the process that defines the object as an *object* (1992:41, emphasis in original).

The sister city proposals examined in this study achieved the conceptual status of an ‘object’ when they were singled out for the attention of local authorities, and hence for public attention, through a request for a formalised sister city agreement. The very act of seeking council approval for their project set in motion a risk assessment process which might not otherwise have occurred. For example, in the case of the Olympia-Rafah sister city proposal examined in chapter three, the group that made the proposal, the Olympia Rafah Sister City Project (ORSCP), had an unproblematic status within the Olympia municipality until it sought the formal recognition of council, and appears to have returned to that status once that proposal had been rejected and the subject had been excluded from the local council’s agenda.

During the twentieth century, risk management emerged as a priority for governments and bureaucracies at all levels in advanced industrial societies (Kasperson et al, 1988), and those charged with its application must remain ever on the alert to potential threats. These include risks to the legitimacy of the local democratic process itself, as controversy and debate can exacerbate divergences between expert and public assessments (1988:178). As the form of ‘sociotechnical network’ closer to citizens and responsible for deciding between diverse and conflicting claims on government resources, local governments are risk processors *par excellence*. In the terminology of Hughes (1987, cited in Hilgartner, 1992:45), they are ‘system builders’, spending much of their time processing a catalogue of risk objects of which the general public remains generally unaware (1992:52). Hilgartner (1992) argues accordingly that looking to ‘the public’ or the mass media as the most likely locations of risk object construction, as is done in most risk theory, deflects attention away from those actors at the centre of risk processing; namely “those that devote sustained attention to constructing facts and machines, laws and regulations, organizations and management systems, research programs and data collection systems, risk objects and networks for controlling them” (1992:51). These are most likely to be “communities of specialised professionals”, such as government officials and “political operatives”. “For this reason, he contends, “analysts of the social construction of risk who start with “the public” are beginning their work in the wrong place. The most important action takes place in organizations (1992:52). Having thus identified the ‘right place’ to start, I focus my analytic attention on specific processes and contexts within which

peace building projects are shaped and constrained by governments, at both local and national scales.

Hilgartner (1992) notes the problematic nature of linkages between objects and putative harm, given the wide range of objects to which harm could potentially be attributed.

One can always construct many potential branches to the chains of causation that lead to disaster. Moreover, the length of each branch can in principle be extended indefinitely; there is no unambiguous end point. Thus, the risk of motor vehicle accidents can be attributed to unsafe drivers, unsafe roads, or unsafe cars ... The risks posed by unsafe drivers, in turn, can be attributed to inexperience, irresponsibility, fatigue, or alcohol consumption. Inexperience, in turn, can be attributed to inadequate driver education programs, which can be attributed to shortage of funds. The networks of objects deemed to pose risks can abruptly terminate, can wind their way back to common cause, or can diverge. The set of possibilities, in principle, is infinite (1992: 42).

In order to understand how some objects are constructed as risky and others are not, argues Hilgartner (1992), it is therefore necessary to unpack the networks of risk objects and causal linkages that people construct through processes of interaction. In the case of the motor vehicle accidents mentioned above, for example, it behoves the sociologist to “look beneath the surface of the category “motor vehicle accidents” and examine the heterogeneous collection of entities that are deemed to be the sources of danger ... Studying risk objects offers a way to pry open networks of risk, and look at the dynamics of the process through which risks are created, controlled and distributed (1996:47, 52).

A puzzling feature of the foregrounding of some objects as risky is that, by objective criteria, the harm they are capable of causing is far less than that

posed by objects that remain in the background. Situations or events that pose only minor threats to public wellbeing sometimes produce intense public reactions, as in the case of the ‘moral panic’ that followed the murder of a two year old child by older children in 1993 (Cohen (2002:ix), while “significant hazards” such as cigarette smoking or driving without seatbelts are largely ignored. Kasperson et al (1988) attribute this seemingly arbitrary allocation of ‘risky’ status to a more coherent process, which they term ‘the social amplification of risk’. Processes of risk amplification blur the boundaries between risk responses and ‘first-order’, embodied harms such as illness, wounding or death, enabling threats perceived to be minor or non-existent by some groups to achieve the status of officially recognised public perils. As Kasperson et al (1988) explain,

(s)ocial amplification of risk denotes the phenomenon by which information processes, institutional structures, social-group behavior, and individual responses shape the social experience of risk, thereby contributing to risk consequences ... The interaction between risk events and social processes makes clear that, as used in this framework, risk has meaning only to the extent that it treats how people think about the world and its relationships. Thus there is no such thing as “true” (absolute) and “distorted” (socially determined) risk. Rather the information system and characteristics of public responses that compose social amplification are essential elements in determining the nature and magnitude of risk. (1998:181).

Kasperson et al (1988) use the metaphor of the stereo receiver to demonstrate how processes of risk amplification occur. Once a ‘risk event’ (identified as an ‘object’ in Hilgartner’s terminology) enters the public domain, it sends out signals that are picked up, interpreted and processed by ‘social amplification

stations', in the form of technical experts, institutions, the news media, social organisations and public agencies. The nature and salience of the symbols contained in message signals are central in determining how they will be received by decision makers, as are the self-representations of those transmitting the messages. Simple rhetorical devices such as repetition of the same information can increase belief in the validity of a message, especially when conveyed by different social actors (1998:180). Alternatively, 'expert' or high status identities may be invoked, in order to afford legitimacy to the perspective expressed.

In discussions conducted within formal institutional spaces, such as public hearings, technical experts are commonly called in to clarify the risks involved. In disputes over environmental pollution, for example, the hearing itself can function as a risk amplification station (see McComas, 2003). In the case of controversial sister city proposals, however, the risk signals flow in the opposite direction *towards* the local authority. Since a core value of local councils is maintaining local order and stability, the fact that there is already disagreement amongst the populace in relation to a program that is an optional extra for councils, constitutes a potent risk signal in itself. This does not bode well for a positive outcome for contested proposals. I examine just such an example in the following chapter, which uncovers the processes through which a risk signal in the form of a contested sister city relationship came to be emplaced as a risk object in the context of a public hearing.

Chapter Three: The Olympia-Rafah public hearing

Background: The Madison-Rafah proposal

On the 17th of April, 2007, a public hearing was held in Olympia, the capital city of the state of Washington, U.S.A, to decide the outcome of a proposal to sister with the war-torn Palestinian city of Rafah, situated on the Gaza strip. At the time of the proposal, Olympia had one existing sister city relationship with Kato City, in Japan, dating from 1981. The initial impetus for the proposed sister city relationship had come from a local peace activist, a young woman named Rachel Corrie, who had since been killed in Rafah while attempting to protect a Palestinian home from demolition by Israeli forces. Uniquely for sister city proposals, therefore, this initiative was supported by a ‘martyr narrative’ (see Peterson, 1996), which, in the minds of peace actors, afforded it a particularly high level of symbolic capital and moral legitimacy.

For proponents of the project, official recognition would have brought several benefits. As a supporter of a similar proposal had argued some years previously, it would have facilitated the process of gaining clearance from the Israeli government for travel to Rafah (Batcheldor, 2007). It would also have allowed access to funding through Sister Cities International, and to its services, such as interpreters and translators. Although these were significant advantages, they were, in a sense, secondary considerations, since the project had been operating successfully as an independent endeavour for some time prior to the hearing. The primary gain would have been symbolic, in that endorsement by an elected government would have conferred official legitimacy upon the claims to ‘normal’ personhood by the people of Rafah. If they had been classified as ‘ordinary’ people of the kind targeted and celebrated in Eisenhower’s people-to-people campaign, and as fictive kin to the

residents of Olympia, the inhumane living conditions of the citizens of Rafah could not have been normatively countenanced by their prosperous U.S. 'sisters'. The outlook for the Rafah initiative was not promising, however, since a precedent had been set three years previously in Madison, the capital of the American state of Wisconsin, for rejecting a sister city proposal with the same Palestinian city. As a writer for the global charity 'Peace x Peace' (2005) later remarked, such a disappointing outcome for a sister city peace initiative in "democratic and liberal Madison" served as a sobering reminder of the difficulty of promoting constructive public dialogue on contentious issues at the local scale.

Public understandings as to the risk posed by the proposal varied between council and citizen volunteers within the city of Madison. For Marc Rosenthal, a co-founder of the Madison-Arcatao sister city project, the Rafah project constituted a positive risk, in the sense of offering an opportunity to build a more just world by engaging constructively and responsibly with global issues at a local scale. Such an endeavour was "very much within the spirit of sistering and what it means to be a global citizen. In today's globalized world, there are no issue that are purely Madison" he argued (Rosenthal, quoted in Davidoff, 2004a). In the view of Madison mayor Dave Cieslewicz, however, the initiative posed an unfair and unacceptable level of negative risk to the integrity of council, and he took the opportunity of local media coverage of the debate to remind representatives from other sister city projects who were supporting the Rafah proposal that they were venturing onto shaky ground.

This city council and I aren't equipped and we shouldn't be expected to debate Middle East policy when we have city issues to deal with. Also I am

concerned that this issue may put into jeopardy the entire sister city program. As you know, it did come under some fire in the last budget and I'm afraid that raising this issue will only give those who have raised questions about the program more reason to raise questions (Davidoff, 2004).

Beckett (2004) argues that the trajectory of the Madison-Rafah sister city proposal should have been a simple matter, since supporters had been following established procedures in the form and spirit of the city's existing sister city relationships, many of which had been founded on social justice issues and deemed controversial at their inception. "Few communities [had] more consistently taken stances on everything from South Africa's apartheid system to Burmese trade policy to the war in Iraq, and few American towns [had] forged more international sister city relationships than this one", he notes (*Capital Times*, May 17th, 2004). For the Rafah proposal, however, the symbolic stakes were particularly high. As Davidoff (2004b) observes, "(h)ad the measure prevailed, the Madison-Rafah sister city program would have been the first solidarity-model Palestinian sister city pact to be approved by a city council in the United States". Hundreds of citizens filled the Madison City Council chambers to take part in the debate (Hurd, 2004), but ultimately, the city's politically left leaning 'habitus' (see Lee, 1997) proved an unequal defence in the face of intense, if not representative, local opposition. "After more than four hours of public testimony, council members voted 9-8 in favor of the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, but the tally fell two votes short of the 11 needed for passage" (Davidoff, 2004), so the proposal was defeated.

Looking back, the Madison City Council President pointed to the nub of the problem: Councils cannot approve optional proposals that are seen to be dividing their own cities. In her judgement, an important civic lesson learned

from the Rafah debate had been that interest groups wanting to establish sister city relationships must resolve local opposition *before* putting their proposals to council (Barret, 2004). By this assessment, any controversial sister city project that comes before local councils is inevitably doomed to failure.

Despite attempts by some opponents to frame it as such, the Rafah sister city issue had not been problematic for the local Jewish community as a whole, having been initiated by a Jewish academic with strong support from Jewish as well as non-Jewish residents of Madison. Rather it was contested partly on the basis of the threat it was considered by pro-Israeli groups to pose to the moral and political positioning of the Israeli state in the ongoing Middle East conflict. One commentator went so far as to describe the Madison-Rafah sister city debate as “a battleground for Israel’s legitimacy, concluding that

(t)his initiative was significant, because only a few American cities have adopted Palestinian towns. Its acceptance would have meant a victory for the Palestinian Authority and its supporters by advancing their long-term objective of delegitimizing the State of Israel and by creating a climate congenial to politically correct anti-Semitism ... Because the local Jewish community and unaffiliated Jews, some belonging to the "soft Left," acted effectively, the City Council did not adopt the proposal. Although Madison may seem far away from Israel, the decision reached there has considerable importance (Fishman, 2004).

Dittmer (1977) notes that “to the degree that a symbol succeeds in becoming a depository of widespread interest and feeling, it can incite prolonged public controversy, mobilize demonstrations of support or protest, and otherwise influence social behaviour” (1977:569). The ‘special’ relationship between the United States and the state of Israel is the subject of global political contention, but most apposite for the purpose of this thesis are Friedman’s (1986)

observations regarding the affective and identity-related dimension of US support for the Israeli state. For Friedman (1986, citing Israeli philosopher Rabbi David Hartman), the state of Israel stands as a vicarious symbol of courage that is incorporated into American identity, with far reaching consequences for US foreign policy, particularly with regard to foreign aid.

Undoubtedly, the Jewish vote in America and Israel's role in America's global defense go a long way toward explaining this extraordinary level of aid. But they do not tell the whole story. The aid is too out of proportion. It is clear that Israel also touches something very deep in the American consciousness. "Israel evokes the pioneer spirit of American democracy," remarked Rabbi Hartman. "It also touches a deep spiritualism in America and its biblical roots. The United States may need Saudi Arabia, but Saudi Arabia doesn't touch America's soul, or its sentimentality about the American dream. I don't view Israel's dependency on America as something that has gone wrong, or is sick. It derives from the fact that this nation is mirroring something very deep in America."

For Jewish-American opponents of the Madison proposal therefore, the project constituted a high risk to both aspects of their hybrid identities. For Jewish *supporters* of the proposal, on the other hand, attacks came from a different quarter. Their public stance attracted intense public vilification from fellow Jews for whom Jewish identity and loyalty to the Israeli state were inseparable, the most vitriolic diatribes being directed against Jennifer Loewenstein⁶, the Jewish academic who had initiated the proposal (see for example, masada2000.org, n/d). Such attacks marked the sister city debate as an in-group dispute over the normative boundaries of Jewish identity, as well as one that contested the boundaries of the internationally engaged city.

⁶ See Loewenstein (2004) for a personal account of the marginalisation of Rafah, which she describes as 'a land out of bounds'.

As previously mentioned, local authorities are commonly claimed to be “closer to the people” and consequently more enabling of democratic participation than national or state level governments, but such closeness can be a double-edged sword. Jones and Harsell (2007:197) observe that “(t)he proximity of municipal governance to its constituents places an emphasis on quality-of-life issues, which can be divisive and not readily amenable to compromise. Furthermore, for local councils,

(i)nterpreting public opinion is tricky business, not least because issues are diverse and opinions are complicated. Interests, principles, partisan attachments, ideological convictions, and more all figure into the views that citizens express toward matters of public life. These objects of political thought likewise vary, from dull to vivid, practical to emotional, and substantive to symbolic” (Nelson and Kinder, 1996:1055).

Governments deal with issues that “cause deep anxiety for large numbers of people (Edelman, 1998:131), and Mirza (2005) contends that “(a)ddressing the emotional needs of citizens is now a core, rather than a supplementary function of government, ... [expressing] “the fundamentally psychological aspect of the individual’s relationship to society” (2005:263). Such had been the complexities of civic office facing the Madison City Council in 2004, as it decided the outcome of the controversial sister city proposals that had been placed before it.

The Olympia-Rafah proposal

The failure of the Madison proposal was met with disappointment and resentment by its supporters, who had placed their trust in the sister city model as a means of publicly affirming the legitimate place of the people of Rafah

within the 'human family'. Three years later, another attempt to achieve this goal via a sister city relationship was launched in the north-Western state of Washington, and attracted a similar level and kind of local opposition. The outcome of the Olympia proposal was to be determined by a council vote in the context of a formal public hearing, following the delivery of pre-registered citizen testimonies. In line with the standardised format of public hearings, citizens took turns to present spoken testimonies over a microphone to a panel of six councillors, who were seated facing the citizen assembly. These councillors were 'system builders' (Hughes, 1987, cited in Hilgartner, 1992) charged with the decision as to whether the proposed relationship would be incorporated into the formal municipal system of Olympia. The panel comprised the mayor, Mark Foutch, the mayor pro tem, Laura Ware, and council members TJ Johnson, Doug Mah, Karen Messmer and Jeff Kingsbury. One councillor was absent on the night of the hearing, but had indicated in advance his willingness to concur with the majority vote.

Public hearings, as distinct from public meetings in general, are a legal requirement in the United States in order for certain types of legislation to pass (Stern and Fineberg, 1996, McComas and Scherer, 1998). They are a common form of local democratic engagement in that country, with up to three quarters of Americans reporting having visited at least one hearing during their lifetime (Karpowitz, 2008). Ninety seven percent of American cities use them as a strategy for dealing with citizen concerns Berman (1997, cited Adams, 2004:44). For city councils, they have the advantage of being easy to convene, and provide a means for publicly recognising citizen perspectives in a regulated context. From the perspectives of citizens, they provide a unique political

setting in which Americans can air their views for an agreed period of time on issues that affect them most directly (Stern and Fineberg, 1996, Karpowitz, 2008:3).

As forums for the enactment of local democracy, however, public hearings are problematic in several respects. Citizens who participate are not representative of the general community, and the hearing format can ‘invite posturing’ (Stern and Fienberg, 1996:200) on the parts of narrow interest groups who are ‘hyper-invested in the issue under consideration and consequently more extreme in their attitudes and arguments’ (Karpowitz, 2008:8). This can divert councillors’ attention from other, possibly more moderate views of the majority of citizens who chose not to attend the hearing. Unused to public speaking, citizens can also wander off topic when addressing the assembly, unnecessarily depleting public resources of time and energy. Elected officials and citizens generally do not engage in discussion at such gatherings, except on a superficial level, as the public hearing format does not allow for such diversions. Nor is there any interactive exchange of viewpoints among citizens, which might enable them to reach common understandings (Adams, 2004). Furthermore, councillors tend to be inflexible and conservative in style, often providing only technical or legal justifications for their decisions (Stern and Fineberg, 1996, Karpowitz, 2008) in response to the frequently impassioned normative entreaties of citizen orators. Finally, and most crucially for issues of local governance, citizen testimonies at public hearings are generally held to have little or no impact on the direction of government policy (Adams, 2004, Karpowitz, 2008, Topal, 2009).

Citizens march up to the podium, give their two minute speeches, the presiding official says “thank you very much,” and then officials proceed with their business irrespective of the arguments made by citizens. Citizens may speak their mind, but officials do not listen and usually have their minds made up before the public hearing. Hearings, in this view, are mere democratic rituals that provide a false sense of legitimacy to legislative outcomes: Officials can say they received input from the public, and it can give their decisions the respect afforded to democratic processes, even though citizen input has no impact (Adams, 2004:44).

“In this sense”, argues Karpowitz (2008), public hearings are “more democratic show than meaningful deliberation” (2008:6), “best for presenting alternative views, information and concerns [but] less useful for dealing with power imbalances, creating trust, or promoting dialogue (Stern and Fienberg, 1996:200). The public hearing format is therefore of dubious utility for the resolution of contentious issues at the level of local governance. Drawn by a promise of political agency, citizens speaking in favour of proposals at public hearings do so within an institutional context that is ultimately more constraining than enabling. Since the hearing process itself confirms the existence of unresolved local divisions, it can intensify council concerns about the risks posed by a contested initiative, thereby better serving the interests of opponents of the developments under consideration.

The setting

The Olympia-Rafah sister city hearing was preceded by other business relating to the city, such as special recognitions and details of community programs. Also included was a announcement by Councillor TJ Johnson regarding the assassination earlier that day of the Mayor of Nagasaki, a personal friend who had been co-chair of the Mayors for Peace campaign. Cr. Johnson linked the

Japanese mayor's assassination with the shootings at Virginia Tech, which had occurred only a few days earlier, as "a powerful reminder of the violence in every society". On the front of his desk was a hand-written sign in capital letters, reading 'TOO MANY DEAD'. Cr. Johnson's announcement set the tone for his subsequent contribution at the conclusion of the ensuing debate. To his mind, the normative boundary between the political and the personal with respect to a public official was permeable, a perspective later implicitly endorsed by his colleague and fellow panel member, Mayor Pro Tem Laura Ware. His sobering announcement was followed by the short 'public communications' section of the meeting, an opportunity seized by one resident of Olympia to elaborate on a bizarre, Anti-Asian conspiracy theory. At the conclusion of his incoherent speech, he thanked Mayor Foutch, who politely thanked him in return. The mayor's response to such an inappropriate display draws attention to the standardised civility norms governing such assemblies.

Quite remarkably, given the contentious nature of the debate and its live electronic streaming across the world, most speakers gave their full names and addresses prior to delivering their testimonies. Councillors were seated behind desks arranged in a curve, facing the assembled citizens. A council spokesperson made a brief statement regarding the background of the proposal and confirmed that all of the official requirements for consideration of a formal sister city relationship had been met. Speakers had been requested to confine their speeches to three minutes or less, and presented them at a raised podium to one side, also facing the audience. The hearing commenced at 8 p.m. Since many more supporters than opponents had registered to speak, their testimonies

were presented alternately, until such time as there were no more waiting to speak in opposition.

The debate

In line with Adams' (2004) contention, the evidence suggests that the outcome of the long, often emotional and obviously tiring public debate that ensued was a foregone conclusion. The process of emplacement of the Olympia-Rafah sister city proposal as a municipal 'risk object' can be seen to have been well underway by the time the hearing commenced, with the local media conveying the opposing viewpoints of citizens in some detail. *The Olympian* (2007), for example, published a sample of emails that had been sent to council and to its own editor, including a message from a resident who also spoke later at the hearing. This opponent warned the council of the risk to its reputation, should it appear to be endorsing symbolic harm to its own residents. "This is a direct slap in the face to mainstream Jews in Olympia who have lived here in peace for generations and who have greatly contributed to our economy and its institutions", he argued. "I urge you to avoid another embarrassment by not associating the city's good name to this relationship. If there is a local group that wishes to engage in relations with Rafah or any other city or terrorist state, that should be their prerogative. But, the city need not have their name associated with such an ill-fated relationship". Another resident declared that she opposed the proposal because "Rafah is not an "ideal" partner. Other localities that respect the human rights of all people would make better partners for peace". A message from a supporter of the proposal, by contrast, framed the issue as an opportunity for council to *improve* the reputation of the city. "I have lived in Olympia for four years and appreciate the diversity that is

enjoyed here.” he wrote. “Sister city relationships significantly add to the value of living here...The more we as Olympians can become world citizens, the better and safer our world will be. ... (T)his very special area cries out for peace”.

Lyons (2007) records that hundreds of letters and emails had “flooded” the city on the topic. “Numerous phone calls also came in, according to council members. More than 300 people attended the standing-room only public hearing on the project. People waited outside the building to get in to comment and observe. Forty-eight people spoke in support, 24 people expressed opposition”. That there was a polarised citizenry was further drawn to the attention of council when both groups spontaneously seated themselves on opposite sides of the room, leading one opponent of the proposal to question how city officials could hope to get people together in the Middle East by means of a sister city relationship when they could not get local people to sit together in their city hall. The largely predetermined outcome of the hearing is further indicated in a comment by the mayor, who recalled later in the evening how he had expressed his misgivings about the likely success of the proposal to one of its subsequent instigators.

MF: I said “John, do you really want to ask that question?” Because it’s going to force the council to take sides in a community that’s probably not going to be very unanimous about this. But if you want to, go do your homework, find out what’s required from the city regulations, engage in some people-to-people work [gestures towards both sides of the auditorium] and see what kind of support you can get and it’s possible that you’ll get a majority. You’ve done all that work, the Rafah sister city program has done that work, and I don’t think you’re going to get a majority on the council.

Nevertheless, as with the meting out of justice, which according to the popular aphorism must not only be done but must also be *seen* to be done, the result of the formal hearing had to be visible to all as the apparent outcome of a democratic and accountable process. To that end, the deliberations of councillors, as noted by the mayor at the conclusion of the public testimonies, needed to be as publicly visible and audible as the debate among the citizens.

The debate itself was characterised throughout by competing and often incompatible representations of the proper purpose and scope of sister city relationships, and of the mutual obligations of citizen groups and local authorities with respect to those relationships. Supporters of the proposal understood sister city relationships to be a means of bridging difference, while for opponents they were about connecting with other cities that were as similar as possible to Olympia. For supporters, global peace building fell within the proper scope of council concern, since they considered local and global interests to be inextricably linked. This group believed that council had a duty to lead the city forward in creating an interconnected and more peaceful world, even if that entailed overruling local dissent. For opponents, the primary responsibility of council was the maintenance of peace at the *local* scale, and they held that council should consequently respond only to ‘safe’ and uncontroversial sister city requests.

Several speakers on both sides of the debate prefaced their arguments with claims to moral or expert identities, thereby bolstering the credibility of the ‘risk message’ they were about to send to the panel. Supporters frequently cited positive personal experiences of Rafah and its people and some referred to their travels in the Middle East in general. One supporter identified himself

as a former military intelligence officer, while others represented themselves as academics and members of religious orders or churches, and peace-building organisations, including some that were specifically working on Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. Like lawyers for the defence and prosecution addressing a jury, each group sought to convince the row of councillors facing the assembly of the validity of their respective positions. To this end, opponents accentuated the messages that their group had already conveyed to council through other means, namely that the proposed sister city relationship was a potential source of harm to themselves and to the city. Proponents, in turn, denied, disregarded, minimised, or qualified any possible negative outcomes, framing their initiative instead as an exciting opportunity for cultural exchange and peace building, or indicating alternative sources of harm for which the proposed relationship could function as an antidote, such as ignorance, unfounded fear and the foreign policies of belligerent national governments. For some opponents, a tripartite relationship that also involved a sister city relationship with an Israeli city was a viable compromise, but proponents of the proposal responded that this would be discriminatory, since no such conditions had ever been imposed upon U.S.-Israeli sister city partnerships.

Both groups urged the council to ‘know its place’ in three key respects. Firstly, it should know the nature of the place it was considering acknowledging as a ‘sister’ in the collective name of the inhabitants of Olympia. Rafah was framed by supporters as a desperately disadvantaged city inhabited by interesting, worthy, but nevertheless ‘ordinary’ fellow human beings in need of and entitled to humanitarian support, while those against the

proposal framed the same city a site of malevolence, pathology and danger. Secondly, it was argued that council should know the place it was charged with governing. For supporters, Olympia was an open minded and progressive city eager to take its place in the *global* community, while for opponents, it was an imperilled *local* community, unnecessarily divided within its own population and irresponsibly exposed by council to the possibility of symbolic contamination. Finally, council members were urged to know their own place in relation to the appropriate scope of their concerns. While opponents stressed the need for local councillors to confine their activities to matters of local importance, supporters reminded them of their duty to lead and of a primary imperative to address global issues at the local level.

Undaunted by what must have seemed unlikely prospects for success in the light of their own mayor's reservations and the Madison-Rafah outcome, members of the Olympia-Rafah Sister City Project (ORSCP) had prepared well for the public hearing. The proposal had been years in the making, and, during that period, they had worked to ensure that their project had met "both the letter and spirit of the requirements regarding sister city relationships with both Sister Cities International and city regulations" (Lyons, 2007). They had also set up a web site outlining their position and objectives, which had recently expanded to include a list of 'frequently asked questions'. These addressed objections and concerns that had been raised throughout their campaign by council members and other residents of Olympia.

In keeping with Lofland's (1993) observations as to the typical socio-demographic position of American sister city peace actors, citizens who spoke in favour of the proposal presented as uniformly middle class, well-educated

and polite. Their arguments also tended to be more abstract and complex than those of opponents, who were more likely to employ emotional, personalised and antagonistic frames. In their unwaveringly optimistic conviction that a sister city relationship with a war-ravaged and impoverished Middle Eastern city could help to build a better world, supporters can be understood as ambassadors of the ‘project of modernity’ (Habermas, 1997:45), drawing on a ‘class value’ logic as described by Beck (2001). John’s message, for example, was that vigorous debate is a public good in itself, and that global peace is achievable through positive communication across meaningful difference. For John, the real risk lay in doing nothing, as the consequences of failing to act could not be known in advance. His testimony, like those of many other supporters, conveyed no concrete benefit specifically at the local level - which might have mitigated councillors’ perception of the risk it posed - other than the fact that it would incur no cost to the municipality. John was, in line with the motto of Sister Cities International, “thinking globally and acting locally”, and the benefits he anticipated were the global public goods of peace and stability.

John: Allowing people the opportunity to express their opinions and thoughts on controversial topics such as this is essential for coming to mutual understanding where there is disagreement ...I’m asking for your support for one simple reason; that diplomacy and communication are vital for peace and stability in the world. And peace and stability is no more vital than in Israel and Palestine right now. This project provides us an opportunity to do that ... The project would cost the city nothing, but the impact could very well change the world. To not engage in this effort, we do not know what the cost of that would be ... If we ignore the people we disagree with, we lose any chance of peaceful understanding with them. We cannot only deal with people who agree with us. Our city will soon consider a sister city relationship with China,

and China by many is understood to have a history of civil rights abuses, but to refrain from engagement with them is to lose any opportunity for us to influence change, or to speak with one another. This is why I personally hope you will hold sister city status with *them* soon, just as we are asking for your support tonight.

Simona, who identified herself as “an Israeli Jew, a daughter of a holocaust survivor, a veteran of the Israeli military and a professor of Peace and Conflict Studies” began by invoking the historical success of the sister city movement during the Cold War. Like John, she pointed to an alternative source of risk at the national and global levels in the form of her country’s foreign policy. She concluded her testimony with a direct normative message to council that its proper obligations in relation to its citizens extended to overruling dissenting local voices in the pursuit of higher goals.

Simona: As U.S. citizens, we feel an urgency to undo the damage caused by decades of our country’s flawed and one-sided policy. .. Scholars, myself included, have argued that sister city projects that draw clear distinctions between government and citizens have the potential to reduce hatred and dehumanisation that may result in violence. ...When viewed in light of the literature on cross-cultural exchanges and people-to-people efforts and the potential contribution to conflict resolution and global harmony, it is clear that the proposal to make the association between Olympia and Rafah official is not divisive ... While it is important that we listen to and take into account all voices and sentiments represented in our community, as community leaders, you are expected to be forward looking. I hope that you would not shy away from making the decision that it is in the best interests, of our community, all of our community, even if it triggered the opposition of a vocal minority.

Supporters also employed the humanising strategy of linking the proposal specifically to domestic concerns, by stressing the benefits of a sister city

relationship for families and children in the devastated and desolate city of Rafah. One speaker expressed her wish that opponents of the proposal could “have the opportunity to look into a Palestinian child’s eyes and see the human being beyond your fears”. Others told stories of a small boy in Rafah who had not liked Americans until he had seen Rachel Corrie playing soccer with some of his friends, and of a Palestinian toddler, whose behaviour was just like that of other toddlers around the world.

Therese: I’ve worked with Israeli human rights organisations, I’ve worked with Jews in the United States and a broad range of people from various religious and cultural backgrounds, all of whom recognise that it is a shared human need for security and freedom that transcends religious, national, cultural boundaries. When I first went to Rafah in 1991, I met a family who was living in the ruins of their demolished home. They were a family of fifteen. And the father of that family told me “lots of people come and take pictures, but nothing ever changes”. I think that this sister city relationship is an incredible opportunity for us, as a community, to build on the work that’s already been done, and to create change, and to offer an alternative to U.S. policy in the region, which has been failing miserably.

Therese’s statement suggested a clear benefit at the local scale, but it was couched in terms of unspecified change and included a direct criticism of the U.S. state, which rendered the gains she envisaged ambiguous in terms of the risk that overt political disagreement could be seen to pose to council. Donna, in turn, situated her church’s support of the Olympia-Rafah proposal within the broader historical context of its resistance to once commonly accepted social injustices, which had since become objects of universal condemnation. She also redirected the question of moral personhood from ‘them’ back to ‘us’,

urging council to take into consideration the implications of their decision for the collective identity of the people of Olympia.

Donna: Quakers are one of the historic peace churches and we have a history of taking stands that go against what many people considered to be the truth at that time. We were one of the first groups in America to stand against slavery, we lobbied to attempt to get the United States to provide refuge to Jewish victims during the Second World war, we stood against the Japanese internment camps and Quakers are now taking a stand in favour of justice and peace for the people of Palestine as well as the people of Israel ... What we need to do is have human relationships. We need to get to know the people that we don't know. When we don't know people, it's easy to forget about the fact that they are human beings, to lose touch with the fact that there is that of God in them, just as there is that of God in each one of us. I feel that a relationship between the city of Olympia and the city of Rafah can do a lot. It has a lot to say about the kind of community *we* are going to be. Are we the kind of people who are willing to reach out and get to know people or are we the kind of community who just says "everybody says that they people in Palestine are terrorists and that's all I need to know?"

As the mayor himself acknowledged, Carl was a particularly skilled orator. Like Simona, Carl framed sister city relationships as a means of addressing deficiencies in national scale foreign policy. He highlighted the risks attendant on blind inattention to those deficiencies at all political scales, calling for his city's local authority to demonstrate courage and leadership.

Carl: The only thing that I can say to the people who are against it, the trepidation that they have with involving us in an area of the world where the problems are so complex, maybe we shouldn't be there. I ask: "what are we doing in Iraq then? What are we doing in Iraq? We don't know what we're doing in Iraq. People are getting killed because we thought we did. A divisive issue? Yes. But I will take a divisive issue, that maybe hasn't been planned very well, that has as its objective the achievement of a little bit of peace, over what we did in Iraq. Poor planning, poor equipment, and what has happened

because of that? People are dying. The national government of our country right now, and the national government of our country in the past, does not have clean hands. The people who say “this is not our business, it’s not our part of the world”, we’re *in* this world and what happens in the rest of the world is our business. We learned about that on 9/11, didn’t we? Do we want people around the world to hate us, or do we want them to recognise what the flag and the statue of liberty stand for – something good? Be bold, Olympia. Be brave. Forget the imperfections. Go forth and attempt to achieve Olympia’s two cents worth of peace in this world.

For opponents of the proposal, however, it was not at all appropriate for council to brave or bold in the name of local citizens. Rather they envisaged its duty as one of maintenance and conservation of public order, whether in respect to clean streets and safe public spaces, or protecting the ontological security (Giddens, 1991) of residents. While Charles acknowledged the need for councils to ‘make a difference’, he considered the proposed sister city relationship with Rafah to be a misguided and counterproductive means of achieving that goal. In his estimation, Rafah was a physically violent and symbolically polluting place, and council would do better to direct its attention to more worthy, local projects. Like other opponents of the proposal, Charles stressed the danger posed by facilitating connections between his own, peaceful city and one that was steeped in violence. Furthermore, his testimony alludes to the symbolic threat posed by an involuntary shrinkage of social distance between opponents of the proposal and the residents of Rafah, which would follow from fictive kinship ties. As noted by Hess (2000), interaction with disliked others is a necessary feature of mundane social life. However the metaphoric entailments of the sister city label when applied to Rafah would

have made it difficult for opponents to maintain the level of affective dissociation necessary to render such interactions tolerable.

Charles: Many people do not realise that this part of the world is not safe or secure for outsiders to travel... We should be very concerned about the safety and security of a city and its government before establishing a sister city relationship. It's still an active war zone with a simmering of civil war and its citizens, that is, the citizens of the Gaza strip, continue to hurl rockets at Israeli towns across the border. Why should we encourage travel between these two communities when even the Peace Corps won't send volunteers to that troubled part of the world? The city council should be an instrument that brings people together for the common purpose of higher good. The proposal tonight before you is very divisive and, let me add, very emotional, for Jews, many Jews in this community. It is an affront for the city's citizens who don't want to be identified with Hamas, a terrorist government ... The city of Olympia has so many other ways to make a difference. ... protecting children, parks, sidewalks, housing the homeless, instead of passing what amounts to an anti-Israeli initiative. If private groups want to be associated with this, then more power to them. No problem. But why have the city of Olympia's name associated with this proposal?

Naomi, too, emphasised the divisiveness of the proposal and the misguided and erroneous nature of claims made by the ORSCP and its supporters. Like Charles, she pointed to more appropriate, *local* issues that would more properly occupy the energies and resources of council and drew councillors' attention to the limits of their sphere of concern. Naomi made a clear distinction between the harmful and offensive implications of a formal sister city relationship with Rafah and the commendable and innocuous nature of private humanitarian aid to that city. Of central significance to Naomi and other opponents of the proposal was the threatened dissolution of highly valued symbolic boundaries between the two cities concerned and their respectively deserving and

undeserving populations. She concluded her testimony with an emotional plea to council to spare their citizens exposure to unnecessary and alarming risk.

Naomi: This is a very controversial and divisive proposal. It supports one side against another in an ongoing military and political conflict in the Middle East and it's divisive in Olympia as well. It is not benign ... It galvanises one group of us against another group. It does not create peace and understanding in Olympia or elsewhere. But most importantly even, it involves Olympia in an international dispute that is not Olympia city business and it diverts our attention from what *is* our business in Olympia ... There are many important issues that we need to be looking at, to help shape our city, to shape our community. We have issues of homelessness, downtown improvement, economic development, tourism, just to name a few. And I know that there are well-meaning Olympians on both sides of this issue. Those Olympians that support Rafah should carry out their programs on their own, as they have been doing. We know that all humanitarian efforts should be commended, but I urge you as a city council – do not link Olympia with Rafah. As has been stated, Rafah is a city that is steeped in violent behaviour, it has helped to elect and is governed by Hamas, a known terrorist organisation that continues to refuse to renounce violence and that supports suicide bombings and other violent activities for political purposes. Don't, please don't formally link Olympia with Rafah. Don't do this to our community. It is going to further divide us. It is not going to create peace and understanding and it's so offensive to many of us here.

In the lead up to the hearing, the ORSCP had explained on its website that Fatah, not Hamas, was the representative power in Rafah. However the distinction between the two parties was ignored or glossed over by many opponents, who cited the contact with and indirect endorsement of Hamas that official approval would bring as a principal objection to the proposal. One speaker, who displayed an astonishing level of ignorance of the reality of severe and ongoing conflict on other parts of the world, advised the council of

a wide array of more appropriate candidates for sister city relationships with Olympia. For this speaker, the proper scope of sister city relationships did not extend to addressing the extreme violations of the moral order that he deemed to exist in the symbolically polluted city of Rafah.

Two cities are proposed to unite as sisters. By drawing a straight line from Rafah to Olympia, the authors of this proposal have stepped over several continents of peaceful societies, in which we *do* have much in common. The proposal ignores three hundred and fifty million people in South America, nine hundred million of Africa, three point seven billion of Asia and hundreds of millions more of East and West Europe. For example, our communities have much in common with the peaceful aspirations of South American countries, whose families look to the future for better education, health, economic prosperity and political stability, yet we hardly know each other. We should not ignore neighbours and link ourselves to a society that, after fifty years, refuses to recognise its neighbour. The honourable citizens of Rafah may use as an example the seventy-five million Arabs of Jordan and Egypt now living in peace with Israel. A sister city relation with either of those two countries would be based on positives, rather than negatives. Instead, we are asked to form a sister city relationship with a city ruled by the old guard terrorist PLO, and the new guard, Iranian sponsored terrorist Hamas. If the *honourable* citizens of Rafah wish to engage in a dialogue of differences, they only have to go a short distance to sit down with Israelis, and I can assure you, there are many tens of thousands of progressive Israelis who would welcome that opportunity.

For Susan, the fact that council had even entertained the prospect of such a relationship was sufficient to alienate her and her friends from their local authority, and she delivered a thinly veiled threat as to the consequences for the city if the proposal were to be approved.

Susan: It wasn't until Sunday that most of the people I know knew about this. And they were outraged. I've gotten comments like "I don't even want to live

in Olympia any more!”... Rafah, if it wants to be a sister city, should partner up with another city in Gaza and teach them how to be peaceable and loving towards Israelis. I say, this is really going to divide Olympia, so I oppose it.

Striking a less emotional note, Rabbi Seth Goldstein sought to reassure council that he understood its dilemma. His own position, he argued, often required balancing conflicting perspectives in the interests of maintaining local harmony, and the implication was that he was speaking to the panel as a colleague and an equal. As such, he reminded them of their duty to represent *all* of the people of Olympia, and to take heed of the manifest reality that the city’s citizens were divided and, in many cases, deeply distressed. Most appositely for the theoretical framing of this thesis, he stressed the ambiguity of the situation and its openness to multiple interpretations, as well as the unintended consequences that might ensue if enacted applications of a formalised partnership with Rafah were to veer out of council’s control.

Rabbi Goldstein: I recognise that, to the city council, you oversee a broad and broad-based community with a variety of perspectives. I too, in my position, oversee a broad-based community with a variety of perspectives and I understand the role that must be played in terms of one of the primary values being maintaining the peace of that community. I mentioned in a letter... what I feel is the city councils role as community stewards. Not all sister city relationships are created equal. Rafah is a city in the midst of conflict, and more importantly a bilateral conflict.... The city council role is to be mindful of its citizenry and I need not remind you that for myself and others in the Olympia Jewish community that this conflict is not objective or neutral, but holds a deep emotional, personal, spiritual connection with Israel, based on the notion of Jewish individual and collective identity, peoplehood and history. From the perspective of community leadership and its difficulties, I also ask the council to if this is a true sister city relationship, with an equal exchange of ideas and values and interests ... Is the city council prepared to say that Olympia as municipality and *all* of its citizens stand in solidarity with

the struggle of the Palestinian people in whatever form that struggle takes? Who defines it? The vision of this just and prompt peace – and I think we all share a desire for just and prompt peace – is also undefined. So therefore, what is the city council supporting by passing this notion? And whose onus is it to mind the sister city relationship and that it stays with the cultural and less of the political?

Response from council

The six members of the Olympia city council on the panel that evening were themselves conflicted as to the proper scope and purpose of sister city relationships and the appropriate roles of local authorities and citizens in relation to sister cities. Furthermore, their responses indicate that most, if not all, had held firm beliefs about the desirability or otherwise of the proposed relationship prior to hearing the citizens' testimonies. As noted above, for councillors Johnson and Ware, there appeared to be little by way of a boundary separating matters of personal conscience and their duties as public officials. Berezin (2001:83) equates political identities with public identities, noting that they are often subordinate to private identities, but for these two councillors they appeared to be as one; their support for the sister city proposal was part of their all-encompassing moral commitment to addressing global peacelessness at all scales. Both spoke of experiencing difficulties in maintaining 'face' in a world of ubiquitous violence, whether by looking in the mirror, facing the day, facing children, or telling a child that it was worth facing the day. Both accordingly felt a strong imperative to set an example to others in their capacities as local officials, by formally committing the city to an initiative that might reduce that level of violence. Like the citizen proponents who had

spoken at the hearing, they understood the sister cities model to be a tried and tested structure for achieving this goal.

Indicating that ‘her heart was ready to make a motion’, Mayor Pro Tem Ware situated her support for the proposal within the context of the two violent incidents that had occurred earlier in the week of the hearing. This councillor framed terrorism as a global problem to which no country was immune, whether from within or from without. Therefore in her estimation, any means for finding global solutions, such as the sister city relationship under discussion, deserved to be supported. To her mind, it was the courageous citizen group the ORSCP and its supporters that were leading the city of Olympia forward with a peace building, global agenda, and she understood any negative response on the part of council to be an *obstruction* of that necessary project.

LW: I cannot, in good conscience, do anything but make a motion tonight to make an official sister city relationship with Rafah. We are not going to change the world if we don’t honour the person to person relationships in our local cities. People said, well, we’re talking about relationships with terrorists. Yes, there are terrorists in Rafah. No-one’s denying that. There are terrorists in this country. I don’t want to be judged by Timothy McVeigh and I don’t want to be judged by George Bush. This is about just everybody finding out where the common ground is and starting to have dialogue so we can go forward, and there’s nothing wrong with that. If it can happen with Japan, after they bombed Pearl Harbour and we dropped the bombs onto two of their cities, we can have a relationship here, and it’s the only hope we have in the world that we live in today. The stuff in Vermont this week and the mayor in Japan being assassinated – it’s sometimes hard to get up in the morning, and it’s sometimes hard to face our kids and say it’s worth going on. And till you get with a group like this that’s willing to go to a place where it’s dangerous - and absolutely it’s dangerous, I don’t want to pretend that it’s not - but there

are people willing to go across dangerous borders in order to try and change the world. And I am not going to stand in anybody's way, and if having an official city sponsored relationship gets you the resources through Sister Cities International for interpreters and other services, then so be it, we need that.

Councillor TJ Johnson also had no doubt as to the legitimacy of the sister city proposal under discussion, or the desperate need for sister city relationships in general as a means of addressing pervasive violence at a global scale. His response was the longest of all speakers, and he introduced it by expressing his moral aversion to violence and hope for a sister city alternative that could, in the terminology of the Eisenhower story, bypass the constraints of the nation state. His response also accorded with Cr. Ware's in the degree of personal subjectivity and emotional intensity it conveyed.

TJJ: I'm absolutely *sick* of the violence in the world, and I don't know how to get up every day and face the day, or to tell my kid that it's worth facing the day. So when I approach this question, it's really simple for me. The *only* question is what action has the best chance of reducing violence and promoting peace? That's really simple. That's all there is to this. And when looked at in that context, the answer is clear. Reaching out to people and talking to them has a better chance of reducing violence than ignoring them, pretending they don't exist, or demonising them. . . . The whole origin of the sister city business, it was set up during the Cold War, and as was pointed earlier, it wasn't set up to say but don't talk to anyone on the *other* side of the Cold War, it was set up to get around that and to get people to understand that the only way to solve these problems and to get past the due political state stuff is people-to-people.

Cr. Johnson went on to justify the moral stance he had taken on the local issue at hand with reference to macro political theory. For this councillor, as for the sociological theorists discussed in chapter one of this thesis, urban citizens and

their governments offered the best, and perhaps the only, hope for a more peaceful world order, and were a necessary foil to the belligerence of nation states. To his mind, local authorities had a clear duty to demonstrate initiative and community leadership, which outweighed any of the particular objections that had been levelled at the Olympia-Rafah proposal.

TJJ: Joe Hyer said something really that stuck with me recently. He talked about the fact that nation states are increasingly irrelevant, because they can't respond to the challenges of the world today, and Joe made a pretty compelling case for the rise of city-states, or the resurgence of city states, since they were once the dominant factor. And so much of what keeps coming back to this council just seems to point to the truth of Joe's observation there. We're not solving any of these big problems at the federal level or through international agreements; the stuff that's working and the progress that's happening is happening because of people and it's happening at the city level. Cities are taking on climate change; cities are talking on nuclear weapons; cities are taking on the war; cities are taking on impeachment, because nobody else is *doing* this stuff. And this is another opportunity for a city to show leadership and to get around the roadblocks that are created by the nation state and by our government and by the government of Israel and by the Arab governments that support the terrorists in the Middle East. None of that stuff is going to fix the problem. ...The *only* hope of diminishing the violence, of making it less of a mess, is trying something new. Like talking to each other. Like reaching out to people that you might not agree with, that are culturally different, that have linguistic differences and trying to find your common humanity in the context of all of that.

The remaining four council members all voted against the proposal. In line with the framing of opponents of the sister city proposal, they were unanimously troubled by the effects it was having on their local community, and might have in the future if it were passed. Councillor Doug Mah was the

next to speak. In a brief and measured speech, he responded specifically to three of the arguments that had been made by opponents of the proposal: divisiveness within the city, the suggestion of a trilateral arrangement and the absence of any necessity for council approval of an already successful humanitarian project. Like Cr. Johnson, he attributed international agency to local authorities, but in a form that seemed to him to be more evenly applied. In his opinion, the sister city project would cease to be divisive and become a tool for peace building in the Middle East only if a sister city relationship were also established with an Israeli city, through which Olympians could work at a local level to reconcile all afflicted parties.

DM: I believe that the proposal, although well-intended, has created conflict in our community. It *is* divisive, because, although it may be again unintentional, it requires the council, and subsequently, the community, to choose a side, to make a political statement. And we'll be choosing a side in an ongoing conflict, not only from afar, but also now the conflict that is in our own community. And I think it's an ongoing conflict that is best served by a trilateral arrangement between Rafah, an Israeli city and the city of Olympia. And I would encourage the council to support a trilateral arrangement that would allow us to play a needed reconciliation role between Israel, Palestine and the United States. .. I also want to encourage the group to continue the people-to-people and humanitarian efforts without the support or recognition of the Olympia city government and without the divisiveness and conflict that such support may bring.

Councillor Karen Messmer's response also illustrated her preoccupation with the issue of divisiveness, but she referred in addition to two other significant factors that had shaped her decision. The first was that the consequences for council and for the people of Rafah of rejection of the proposal would be low, since the ORSCP would continue its humanitarian work regardless of the

decision made. The second was the distinction she drew between a 'government' program and a 'people to people' program. For this councillor, the kinds of activities conducted by the ORSCP were clearly not the legitimate concern of council. Not only did they require a policy statement on matters that fell outside its area of jurisdiction, but they also threatened its integrity within that jurisdiction. Cr. Messmer's speech points to a paradox within the 'structure' component of the sister city model: formal municipal endorsement constitutes both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness. Proponents of contentious sister city proposals seek council approval because of the high level of symbolic legitimacy it confers on their projects, but that same symbolic legitimacy is anathema to those who oppose those proposals. It is the symbolism of official *naming*, rather than the ideologies or activities of the proposing groups themselves, which generate the public opposition that ultimately dooms them to failure.

KM: I think people-to-people relationships are very important and ... I am very impressed that this organisation has done some amazing work. You've done all this work without necessarily having a government endorsement of that work and I'm not clear that designating a sister city from *this* government, the city government here now, would be the appropriate thing to do. I don't think that not giving the designation diminishes at all what is going on. I want to encourage it to continue to go on. But this is a people-to-people program, not a government relationship, and by endorsing this, whether we want it to or not, it does make a policy declaration. It makes a policy statement. And unfortunately, that official government involvement could worsen the kind of disagreements that we've heard here tonight, about whether we should have this kind of relationship in an official way. I didn't hear anybody say that the people who are doing the sister city *activities* shouldn't do them. I heard them saying that a government endorsement of that is going to create a situation that they're uncomfortable with. The proposal that's before us to make an

official sister city should be something that we can endorse that is extending a hand where we're saying we represent the community at large to do this. And with all the emails and the testimony that we've heard on this issue, I don't hear a uniformity, or even a large majority one sided or the other, about this situation. There *is* a large support, but there's also a lot of people who are very uncomfortable with this, with the governmental endorsement. So I want to encourage the Rafah group to continue to do what they're doing and people to people relationships are important, but I can't support the official sanction of this at this point.

For Councillor Jeff Kingsbury (JK), not only was the proposal divisive, but the controversy he had seen enacted in his municipality had been generated unnecessarily by the act of bringing it before council for official approval. In his opinion, humanitarian or friendship projects did not require council involvement. Furthermore he could not understand why the ORSCP and its supporters would not accept a compromise in the form of a tripartite relationship, which would also include an Israeli community.

JK: I wish that I could support this proposal, but I cannot. I am very concerned about entering into a sister city relationship with a city on the other side of the world, when our own community is *clearly* divided over this issue. If we cannot come to some unity here in our own community about it, then I'm not comfortable entering into a sister city relationship with this community. I *am* comfortable with having people-to-people relationships as well, and the truth of the matter is, it doesn't require a government entity to enter into pen-pal relationships with people and to develop strong person-to-person relationships with people all over the world, and I endorse such activities. And I'm actually dismayed that there has been some talk for some time about getting a tri-community relationship and I don't understand the reticence. And if it is not possible to do that, which I think sends a *true* message of trying to mitigate the kinds of things that are going on in that part of the world, which are horrendous, then I'm uncomfortable endorsing this and I'm afraid I'm going to have to vote against it.

Scanning the political horizon for signs of threat, local politicians as risk managers of the city must attend to three key questions (Kaplan and Garrick 1981, cited in Little, 2007:99), namely:

1. What can go wrong?
2. What is the likelihood that it would go wrong?
3. What are the consequences of failure?

For the councillors who voted against the proposal, the answer to the first question lay in the conflicting interests and demands expressed by citizen speakers during the hearing. What could go wrong was an ongoing and possibly more acrimonious version of the local divisions they had already seen enacted before their eyes in City Hall, and they perceived the likelihood of this happening to be high. The consequences of failure were most clearly articulated in the response of Mayor Mark Foutch (MF) who, as Chair of the meeting, was the last panel member to speak.

His response demonstrates that there was no doubt in his mind his mind that the venture was simply too risky to be allowed to proceed.

MF: It comes down now to whether I think the great majority of the people of Olympia are comfortable with us sanctioning this relationship *in their name*, in *their* name. We're not just seven people. We represent the entire community, or we should, or we try to. Many people of this community feel that this *prior* council, I would say, has not been very careful with the community's reputation. Other people would disagree with that. But the council's taken some pretty controversial stances in the past, and there are still some scars left from that and I hear about that every once in a while. There are still some mistaken impressions of some things we've done in the past, and that's out there in the world and there's very little we can do about that now. Speaking of the world now, we're on streaming video. I have no idea who is

watching this right now and where, and what they think, but we're now in a position, as someone said, that we will be seen to be taking a side in this Arab-Israeli conflict tonight no matter what we do. We're stuck with it. So I will fall back on a factor that council member Messmer cited and that is I don't think our community as a whole is ready to have *their* city council sanction this relationship. I think we should continue to encourage the activities of the sister city project and assist them as much as possible, but as for speaking for the entire community right now, I don't think that would be advisable. So I will not support the motion.

In the mayor's estimation, a highly salient ethical requirement of his office was to shield council from future blame, and the people it served from future distress, by means of present reflexivity and caution. Once formalised, the consequences of council decisions would be beyond the control of council. In contrast to the expectations of courageous leadership (or support for courageous citizen leadership) voiced by supporters of the project, dissenting councillors agreed with citizen opponents that the appropriate role for council was conservation of the established order, and that sister city proposals should not be brought before council unless they had been previously and unanimously endorsed by all interest groups within the city.

The repercussions for the sister city program in Olympia were immediate, with Councillors Johnson and Ware arguing that since the model had been shown not to operate without prejudice in all applications, Olympia should have no sister cities at all. Cr. Johnson accordingly put forward a motion that the city of Olympia's sister city ordinance be repealed.

TJ: If we are using the filter of taking sides as a reason to have or not have a sister city relationship, the current actions of current prime minister Abe's government in Japan are absolutely reprehensible, and contrary to the long

term peace and stability of this country and this world and we should therefore not be having a sister city relationship with Kato. We have no evidence that a large majority of this community supports this relationship ... I think Karen made an interesting point. Why do you *need* government sanction of these things? If it's going to continue, it will continue without us. So based on what we've just seen tonight, Rafah can continue without city sanction. Why would we continue to spend money, which we do, on behalf of the Kato sister city relationship? And in terms of the proposed sister city with China, China's one of the worst human rights abusers in the entire world. We had *no* interest in a sister city relationship with China prior to last year, when suddenly the Secretary of State dragged the mayor along on a trade mission, and suddenly it was all about money and all about trade, and human rights issues be damned. And the mayor came back and, I think in good faith, began engaging people in a discussion about a sister city relationship which, prior to last year, nobody in the community had even heard of. So again if we're using a filter that these things can continue without government support, and we don't want to take sides, why in the world would we be encouraging a sister city relationship with a Chinese city that is in one of the worst human rights abusers on the planet? So I think it's completely appropriate, given our vote a couple of minutes ago, to dissolve our existing relationship and not have any further encouragement to the China sister city and to repeal our sister city ordinance.

The motion was seconded by Cr. Ware, but opposed by the remaining four councillors and consequently defeated. Cr. Johnson's motion had been based on his interpretation that the rejection of the sister city proposal had been based on the stigmatised moral status afforded the city of Rafah. However the data from the study suggest a more theoretically complex explanation.

Theoretical implications

A month after the defeat of the Olympia-Rafah proposal, Andrew Ford Lyons, the president of the Board of Directors for the Olympia-Rafah sister city project, publicly posed the question as to how a proposal that been so strongly supported at the local level had come to be rejected by democratically elected

officials. His personal conclusion was that, in their responses to the Olympia-Rafah and Madison-Rafah proposals, officials of both cities had submitted to the fear-mongering tactics of a vocal minority. “Our critics had fewer people in their ranks”, he reasoned, “but they were scarier” (Lyons, 2007). Based on my own, sociological analysis of the video of the Olympia-Rafah public meeting, I argue instead that the root cause of the proposal’s rejection is to be found in a weakness within the ‘structure’ component of the sister city model itself. The proposal was rejected primarily, I contend, not for reasons of racism, intimidation or ignorance - although instances of all three are notable to various degrees in the expressed views of a minority of opponents - but because it had been successfully emplaced as a ‘constructed’, division-generating risk object.

As detailed in chapter two of this study, ‘constructed’ emplaced risk objects are material or abstract entities that have been successfully linked to putative harm (Hilgartner, 1992). They then become the focus of blame if adverse consequences eventuate (Kendra, 2007). In the lead-up to the public hearing, the proposed relationship had been successfully argued to pose a threat to cohesion within the local community and to the integrity of the local council, a perception which the display of local polarisation at the hearing only served to confirm. As had been the case in Madison, the city council of Olympia reacted primarily to the manifest reality that its citizens were vocally, and apparently immutably, divided over the proposal. A citizenry that is at loggerheads over local government decisions is a politically disgruntled and unstable citizenry, and such a prospect is anathema to local councils, which, as democratic institutions, depend on public approval for their continued existence. Furthermore, unlike their institutionalised obligation to attend to

such mundane matters as planning permits or the maintenance of public facilities, sister city relationships are an optional extra for councils and they are under no obligation to accept the additional risks that contested proposals incur.

The specific weakness demonstrated to inhere in the ‘structure’ component of the sister cities model is its incapacity to accommodate conflicting and incompatible understandings at the local scale, with regard to the nature and scope of sister city relationships and the mutual obligations they entail within the citizen group/local authority dyad. While high levels of semantic plasticity can be seen to operate on both of these dimensions, there was no core meaning to act as a referent when contesting interpretations collided. Proponents of the proposal all understood sister city relationships to be vehicles for bridging meaningful difference. They framed themselves as positive risk takers addressing peacelessness on an international scale, and expected their local authority to demonstrate innovative leadership in accordance with this stance. Opponents, by contrast, understood sister city relationships as a means for building friendships between people who are fundamentally similar. They, in turn, viewed the Rafah proposal and its instigators as a source of negative risk and *cause* of peacelessness, and expected their local authority to be cautious and risk avoidant. Hearing a cacophony of irreconcilable voices, a ‘categorical imperative of avoidance’ (Japp, 2000) inevitably emerged for the majority of decision makers within the Olympia city council.

The outcome of the Olympia-Rafah sister city proposal demonstrates the failure of the sister cities structure to withstand conflicting

and incompatible understandings of sister city relationships and the mutual obligations they entail within the citizen group/local authority dyad. Having watched the video of the Olympia public hearing several times, however, I argue that the hearing nevertheless represents a modest contribution to peace building, independently of the sister cities model. Of crucial significance is the fact that the event was videorecorded and subsequently posted on the Olympia council's website. It would be difficult for a viewer in any part of the world with sufficient interest and patience to watch and listen throughout the entire hearing to leave the experience with the impression that the rejection of the proposal was simply the result of American prejudice against the Palestinian people. While expressions of hostility and anti-Palestinian sentiment are indeed evident in the video, they are by far outnumbered by demonstrations of humanitarian good will and of a strong political commitment to the peace process, often articulated by speakers identifying as Jewish. The justifications of the dissenting councillors can be seen to be focused on their primary duty to maintain local stability, rather than on any 'malignant positioning' (Sabat, 2003) of Palestinian cities and their occupants. Finally, the mayor of Olympia can be seen to be stuck, in popular parlance, 'between a rock and a hard place', as he conveys what is evidently for him a difficult and even painful decision. His obligations as a risk manager for the city as a whole had demonstrably propelled him and his fellow dissenting colleagues inexorably towards rejection of the proposal. Collectively, these factors send a relatively accessible, moderating message to the residents of the rejected Palestinian city and to viewers elsewhere in the world as to the ethical, bureaucratic and

political complexities of seeking formal endorsement for controversial sister city projects.

In the next chapter, I examine a contested proposal to link a Western city with a Palestinian city that met with similar resistance to that encountered by the Olympia-Rafah proposal, but which resulted in a very different outcome. This is the successfully established sister city relationship between the Australian municipality of Marrickville, New South Wales, and the historic Palestinian city of Bethlehem.

Chapter Four: The Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city relationship

Background to the relationship

Three months after the defeat of the Olympia-Rafah proposal, a formal sister city relationship between Marrickville, an inner city municipality on Sydney, Australia, and Bethlehem, Palestine, was ratified by the mayors of both councils. The proposal had attracted no opposition in Bethlehem and was the thirty-sixth sister city for the municipality. As a site of high religious significance for Christians, Bethlehem is much sought after as a sister city in Western countries, with of ten of its sister cities and regions located in Italy alone. Marrickville had five existing sister city relationships at the time of the proposal, with Keelung in Taiwan, Kos in Greece, Funchal in Portugal, Lanarca in Cyprus and Safita in Syria. In contrast to the Olympia-Rafah proposal, the partnership with Bethlehem had also been unproblematic for the majority of Marrickville councillors, who had seen it as an expression of the council's policy to implement programs reflecting the interests and concerns of its culturally diverse population. Nearly forty percent of Marrickville's population of 76,000 was born overseas, with the most common languages other than English spoken at home being Greek (5270), Vietnamese (3771), Chinese (3259), Arabic (2689) and Portuguese (2236) (Marrickville Community Profile, 2004:19). For the serving mayor, Morris Hanna, the relationship with Bethlehem was particularly appropriate because both Marrickville and Bethlehem are 'multicultural' cities (Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) News, 2007).

Within the council, the proposal was opposed by a single councillor, whose objection was based on his scepticism about the efficacy of existing

sister city programs in Marrickville. Otherwise, it was strongly supported by council and by the general community. Although driven by council rather than a citizen group, popular approval of the project was affirmed by calls and letters to council and by written comments in a guest book provided at the signing ceremony. The Community Development Officer for Marrickville Council later recalled that “people were ringing up, saying (things like), I was born in this local government area seventy years ago and I really support the signing of this agreement. They were the generic population, saying, we support that promotion of understanding and peace” (personal communication, 2007). In supporting the Bethlehem proposal, the people of Marrickville, like the people of Madison and Olympia before them, were putting their trust in the sister city model to help them to build peace and cross-cultural understanding with the people of a Palestinian city. That this was a normal and uncontroversial application of the model from the perspective of the council and citizens of Marrickville is borne out in the comments of Jennifer, a local supporter and member of the ‘Friends of Bethlehem’.

Jennifer: I’ve often spoken at Marrickville council meetings when there’s an issue that concerns me or my neighbours, but this was so non-controversial, I didn’t go and waste their time by voicing support, because nobody was opposed to it. Why would I? The committee had the support of all the councillors on the issue of Bethlehem, although one was concerned about the nature of the sister city committee and the way the sister city program operates within Marrickville. There was no opposition from any of the councillors to this going ahead; there was no opposition from any residents to this going ahead; so therefore why would I go to the committee meeting and spend five minutes making a speech? I have been to council meetings where you could not get in the door for residents who were concerned about the

issue. The airport issue - the third runway - you had people down the stairs, but there was no-one from the local community at that meeting.

The proposal was also uncontroversial in the view of a Jewish resident who had attended the meeting and had commented that most of the Jewish community were likely to be “unconcerned” (Creagh, 2007). From the perspective of the Australian Federal Government and the mainstream news media, however, the proposal was far from unproblematic. Speaking indirectly through the media rather than to the council concerned, the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, declared that Marrickville council was “very foolish to associate itself with people who support terrorist organisations”, while Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews noted that the visiting delegation “would have to undergo stringent tests before being granted visas” to visit Australia. The *Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, two of Australia’s pre-eminent broadsheets, featured the story prominently, with one entry making the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Interviews were also broadcast on several radio stations, including the multicultural, multilingual station SBS (Special Broadcasting Service). An anonymous journalist writing for the *Australian* (14/6/07) published one feature under the headline ‘Terrorist Twin’, while Sunanda Creagh of the *Sydney Morning Herald* asserted that the war in the Middle East had “come to the Inner West”.

At issue was the victory in the 2006 Palestinian general elections of *Hamas*, which is classified as a terrorist organisation by the European Union, the United States and Australia. Although widely reported in the Western press as an unexpected outcome, Hamas’ success was unsurprising in the light of its perceived contributions to local stability, improved council services and lower

levels of corruption (see Zunes, 2006). The term ' Hamas' therefore denotes a more morally and functionally ambiguous entity than the 'terrorist' classification would suggest, and this ambiguity allowed for polarised and sometimes confused understandings of the nature of the Bethlehem council to proliferate in media discourses. As indicated in the Olympia-Rafah debate, the name ' Hamas' is invoked in sister city discourses as a synonym for terrorists, functioning as a signal amplifier (Kasperson et al, 1988) connecting proposed sister city relationships with Palestinian cities to putative harm to Western urban populations. From that point it is but a short step to suggestions that the Bethlehem local council, which has a Christian mayor but includes five members of *Hamas* and one member of *Islamic Jihad*, will use sister city relationships to promote a terrorist agenda. Seriously misguided scenarios may then be envisaged via an imputed association of Hamas with the globally active terrorist group *Al Qaeda*, which was responsible for the September 11th attacks on the United States. For example, the second page of an internet search in late 2007, using the search engine Google and the keywords 'Bethlehem', 'Marrickville' and 'sister city' yielded a blog under the pseudonym *Aussie Bagel*, in which a story from the *Sydney Morning Herald* was reproduced, interspersed with the blogger's comments attacking the proposal. The text was preceded by the cartoon in Figure 3 (below). The blogger notes that the cartoons on the site are "often corny, but their innocence and cream cheesiness makes for a welcome break from the seriousness of life".



Figure 3. Cartoon from ‘Aussie Bagel’ blog, 20.07.07

In the article reproduced in this blog, and in almost all other mainstream news coverage, the name of a single individual resonated as the voice of opposition to the Bethlehem sister city initiative. This was Vic Alhadeff, the Chief Executive Officer of the *New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies*, which is the representative body of the Jewish community in New South Wales.

The Jewish Board of Deputies’ perspective

Mr. Alhadeff’s profile on the web page of the Sydney Jewish Writers’ Festival reports that he grew up in South Africa after his parents had escaped from the Holocaust, and that, as a crusading journalist in South Africa, he had played a role in uncovering a scandal which brought down the Prime Minister of the day. After migrating to Australia, he was for some time editor of the *Australian Jewish News*. I interviewed him in his office at the headquarters of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, in Sydney. Upon my arrival for the interview, I was approached by two armed security guards, who asked and then checked by telephone the purpose of my visit. Unfamiliar with the area, I had arrived early for the interview and, as was common practice for such situations,

I asked if I could wait in the building. My request was refused by the guards, who suggested that I could spend some time in nearby café. This was my first experience of this strongly bounded and defended organisation. After returning at the appointed time, I was accompanied by one of the armed guards in the lift to the required floor, where I was greeted by a member of the administrative staff. The staff member then offered me refreshments and showed me to Mr. Alhadeff's office, signifying my status transition from suspect intruder to invited guest. Mr. Alhadeff (VA) began the interview by situating my experience within a broader context of risks posed by anti-Semitism to the safety of the Jewish community in New South Wales.

VA: Unfortunately, the Jewish community is subject to threats and to attacks as well. They can be anything from abusive calls to petrol bomb attacks. During the 1991 Gulf War, for example, six synagogues in Sydney were firebombed. Last year, in the space of a few weeks, Parramatta synagogue was physically attacked three times and there was an attempted arson attack on a youth centre. So it's an unfortunate fact of life.

Mr Alhadeff (VA) explained that he had been democratically elected to his position on the Jewish board of Deputies by the Jewish community of New South Wales, and that his organisation serves as the voice of the Jewish community in communications with state government and the media. He identified fostering peaceful relations as an integral part of the work done by his organisation, which liaises and organises joint functions with religious groups from all faiths, as well as with schools, Rotary and RSL clubs. Earlier in 2007, the year when our interview took place, he had spoken out on behalf of his organisation against the views of an Israeli academic who had called for

a quota on Muslim immigrants to Australia. "The Jewish community dissociates itself from the comments by ... Raphael Israeli," he had announced at the time. "We do not believe in racial or ethnic quotas or stereotyping. These comments do not reflect the position of the Jewish community and are unhelpful in the extreme. The Jewish community has a strong and proud record in fighting racism, and condemns all expressions of bigotry" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, February 16, 2007).

In the light of the diverse opinions that I had seen and heard expressed during sister city debates by people collectively identifying as Jewish, I asked him in what sense he understood the Jewish people of New South Wales to be a 'community'. His response points to the permeability of boundaries separating political, religious and ethnic dimensions of individual and group identity construction.

VA: They are a community in that, while there is an enormous range of opinion on all manner of issues, there are certain core beliefs which are central to Jewish identity. And they are beliefs which I guess straddle the boundary between religious and cultural and traditional and historical.

BL: And political?

VA: If you say that the existence of Israel is political, then yes, political too. If I say the existence of Israel is central to Jewish identity, to me that is not a political statement so much as a - I don't know what bracket it actually is. Is it cultural? Is it religious? Because it's something that is not *just* political. Jews have been in Israel for four thousand years. Is that political? Is it historical? Is it religious? It's all of the above.

VA's personal and professional commitment to protect the Jewish people in the Australian state of New South Wales from symbolic and physical harm was, in his view, inseparable from his efforts to protect the reputation of the Israeli state. In this guardian capacity, he was constantly in a state of vigilance regarding any developments that could have impacted negatively, however indirectly, on the people who had elected him to safeguard their interests. VA told me that he had first heard about the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city proposal when it was brought to his attention in an email message from a person who had seen the public minutes of a Marrickville City Council meeting. He was reluctant to speculate on what the goals of the proposed sister city relationship might have been, commenting that he was only interested in its possible, and in his view, likely, effects.

VA: The intention itself can be presented as one thing, but there might be others which are not put down on paper. Our concern was the possible ramifications of such a relationship. The reason that we opposed a relationship between Marrickville and Bethlehem is that Bethlehem council is dominated by Hamas in the main, and Islamic Jihad as well. Hamas particularly is openly committed to the destruction of Israel. Its aim is to destroy the state of Israel, and to kill Jews, wherever they may be. So that transcends politics, transcends Israel, transcends the state of Palestine. So our concern was that a formal sister city relationship with a council, wherever it may be, that is dominated by an entity that is committed to kill Jews, committed to destroy Israel, will give, well, ammunition is not the appropriate word, will give voice to that point of view.

As had been the case with the opponents of the Olympia-Rafah sister city proposal, VA did not express concern about the possibility that terrorists might use the Marrickville relationship as a cover for entering Australia with

murderous intent; rather his preoccupation was with the reputational risk posed to the state of Israel by the relationship and the role that Marrickville council would play in *giving voice* to anti-Semitic interest groups. In the normative framing of VA, local councils should concern themselves with the material cleanliness, and also by implication, the *symbolic* cleanliness of the municipalities they had been elected to serve.

VA: Such relationships, by definition, involve exchanges of personnel, exchanges of visits, reciprocal visits. Therefore - and this is exactly what happened - a delegation came out here from Bethlehem and within minutes of arriving here, the Mayor of Bethlehem was starting to talk about, quote unquote, "Israel's apartheid wall". It is not a wall, it is ninety six percent fence, and it is not an apartheid barrier. And that's exactly the reason why we oppose this; because you enter into a relationship with someone who espouses a particular point of view. We considered that they would come out and start pushing that point of view, and that was precisely what happened.

BL: Now that point of view is accessible to anybody on the internet, so what is the particular problem with the mayor coming here? He is to be expected to be saying, to feel this way. If anybody knew anything about him, they would know that this is his position. What is the particular difficulty of him coming here as part of the sister city delegation?

VA: The particular difficulty is that an Australian council, incidentally, whose responsibility should be, I imagine, keeping Marrickville clean and localised issues – but that's an issue for ratepayers and not for me – is giving voice to an organisation which promotes killing of Jews, wherever they may be. To me, such a position is outrageous. It's racist violence in the extreme.

As with the Olympia-Rafah opponents, VA's opposition to the project was directed specifically towards the 'structure' rather than the 'concept' component of the sister city model. While he was happy to support

humanitarian aid to the Palestinian community of Bethlehem, he balked at the legitimisation that he believed a formal sister city relationship with an Australian city would confer on the expression of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic views and sentiments. His subsequent comments also refer to a proposed sister city relationship between the neighbouring municipality of Leichhardt and the Palestinian city of Hebron, which is the focus of the next chapter in this study.

VA: We do not oppose this because it's a Palestinian city. Any project which is humanitarian, which is going to promote peace and goodwill, we would absolutely endorse. And this applies to the mooted relation between Leichhardt and Hebron. We have given them examples of humanitarian projects. For example, there is something called the Peres Center for Peace, which does wonderful humanitarian work. So we have said to both councils, Marrickville and Leichhardt, here is an organisation which is doing humanitarian work - supporting Palestinians who need humanitarian support, no question about it - and it's promoting peace and goodwill on both sides. Even do projects such as this. Don't enter into a partisan relationship which is promoting one side at the expense of the other, and to boot, an organisation, Hamas, which controls Bethlehem council and is openly committed to murder and terrorism.

BL: So your objection to this particular sister city relationship, as I understand it, is to do with the sister city model being applied in this instance. Are you concerned with the sister city model being used as a form of communication of terrorist sympathies? Is that what you're saying?

VA: I am saying that the opposition to this project is not because it was a project that was supporting Palestinians. On the contrary, any humanitarian project we would support. The Peres Center works through Austcare – now there's a credible Australian entity which does humanitarian work. The problem is that it promotes, and gives voice to, a terrorist organisation, yes.

For VA, the credibility afforded by Bethlehem's numerous and hitherto unproblematic sister city relationships had been overshadowed by the election of Hamas members onto the Bethlehem council, and by politically motivated public statements by the mayor of Bethlehem, both of which had brought into question the purported peace building agenda of the sister city relationship.

BL: Bethlehem has sister city relationships with other cities, and there has been no problem, no terrorist activity. What makes you think that things might be different in this case?

VA: It's not a question of things *might* be different in this case. First of all, those relationships may have predated Hamas acquiring a dominant presence on Bethlehem council. The other point is, our concern was borne out precisely by what happened, that is, within minutes of the mayor of Bethlehem arriving in Sydney as part of this sister city relationship, he was interviewed in the media, giving public meetings, attacking Israel and entering into politics. Now is this the domain of a local council? Is this what Marrickville council should be doing? Is that peace making?

In VA's view, therefore, the symbolically potent council-to-council dimension of the sister city structure had been appropriated as conduit for conflict rather than for peace building, as it afforded legitimacy to proponents of the destruction of Israel and the killing of the very people that he, and the organisation he represented, were committed to protecting. What made this particular sister city relationship so perilous from his perspective was the introduction of a new element at the beginning of a chain of putative harm (Hilgartner, 1992) linking the Jewish people of New South Wales to Hamas, as shown in Figure 4 below.

Hamas → Bethlehem council → Sister City Relationship →
Marrickville council → Jewish people of New South Wales

Figure 4. Chain of harm constituting the Bethlehem-Marrickville sister city relationship as a risk object

The councillor's perspective

For Sam Iskandar, the Marrickville councillor who had initiated the proposal, the sister city relationship with Bethlehem held an entirely different meaning. Originally from Lebanon, he had been a resident of Marrickville since 1977, and at the time of our interview was in his third term as a councillor. His profile on the council website listed his interests as youth issues, environmental sustainability, social justice, peace and education. He was elected Mayor of Marrickville just over a year after our interview, which took place on the premises of Marrickville City Council. Councillor Iskandar (SI) had arranged a quiet room to be set aside for the purpose. He began our interview by explaining how the idea for a sister city relationship between Marrickville and Bethlehem had first occurred to him. In 2000, the municipality of Marrickville had hosted delegations from the Sydney Paralympics, and among the guests was a Palestinian team. Buoyed by the apparent success of the Madrid peace conference of 1991 and the Oslo Accords (see el-Nawawy 2002), and encouraged by strong support for peace building activities on the part of the Marrickville community, he had taken the opportunity to bring Arab speaking citizens of Marrickville together with the Palestinian delegation, in order to discuss ways in which they could work together to promote peaceful relations in the Middle East. His account locates the Marrickville-Bethlehem proposal within an established tradition of migrant-initiated sister city partnerships and the people-to-people frame of global peace-building.

SI: I was introduced to sister cities as a councillor, because Marrickville council had sister cities in different cities. I came to this and I tried to understand what the sister city movement is about. After Madrid and Oslo, there were about eight or nine years of talking and building peace between each other and everything was looking great. I said, why don't we take this opportunity to push peace and make it something we should be very proud of in Marrickville? So I spoke to the councillors and they all agreed. It took us about six or seven months to prepare and understand things; then we sent a letter to the mayor of Bethlehem. Why did I choose Bethlehem? Because we have residents here in Marrickville from Bethlehem! They are Christians, they go to churches and the churches supported that [the proposal], so we had a very good community behind us.

Soon after Marrickville council had sent the letter proposing the sister city relationship, however, negotiations were halted by an outbreak of hostilities in the Palestinian Territories. Although the normal processes for establishing a sister city relationship had to be suspended, the need for solidarity became even more urgent for the Marrickville council and for residents who had supported the proposal.

SI: Then the violence escalated and we had problems. There were big, big crimes from both sides. And we were watching. This is Bethlehem. This is the city of God if you like. What could we do to save such a very important city?

The following year, Western relations with the Middle East reached a crisis point as a result of the September 11th terrorist attacks in the United States. Councillor Iskandar's experiences at the annual conference of ASCA, (the Australian Sister Cities Association) in the same year, however, confirmed and strengthened his confidence in the sister city model as a vehicle for addressing

even such an intense manifestation of hostility as those attacks. One of the speakers at the conference had been Mary Eisenhower, the granddaughter of the founder of the people-to-people movement, and her message of hope had a profound effect on SI, both as a city official and as a Muslim Lebanese-Australian desperate to see peaceful relations established in the Middle East.

SI: Bunbury was to me very educative and important conference. It came after the 11th of September attack. Mary Eisenhower is truly a big humanitarian leader. She was talking about the importance of peace at that time. Every one of us was very angry about what happened, very sad about what happened. The atmosphere was very nervous. And I come from a Muslim background. I was moved deeply by her speech, when she was talking about the importance of sister cities in delivering peace and harmony. She started talking about the history of her grandfather and she was educating us about the principles of the sister cities. So it was built on breaking the wall of hatred, building peace, getting to know each other, giving the opportunity for people to know other people, despite what the government politics are. I came from that region, the Middle East, where there are a lot of fights and war. I understand exactly what we really need from the sister city movement, which is peace, harmony, so I consider myself as a sister city advocate. I understand how much this movement can contribute to peace and understanding.

I asked SI how getting to know people from other cultures could help to build world peace, and he answered using the example of two sister city relationships that had been established by Marrickville council prior to the Bethlehem proposal. His response draws on the citizen diplomat metaphor to affirm the efficacy of people to people contacts, which can bypass national governments in order to overcome hostilities based on stereotyping, ignorance and political conflict at the international scale.

SI: OK, we in Marrickville, we are like ambassadors for Australia. We went to Syria, we went to Lanarca, Cyprus, and we signed two agreements there. Australia is always supporting America and America is involved in the war in Iraq. And the Syrian people are against America because of that. But when we went there to have a sister city relation with Safita, they welcomed our delegation, which was talking about peace, about cultural exchange, about understanding each other, people-to-people. As an Arabic speaker there, I educated people about the importance of this movement and they really loved it. Australian society stereotypes these people because of the politics of the government, but the delegations found the Syrians very good people, humble people, they like to be visited, they respect guests, and we were treated very, very well. We were treated as honourable human beings, good friends, and that left a very good impression here in Marrickville community when we went back and started talking to the Marrickville community about it, through sister city celebrations, newsletters, radio programs in different languages. When you talk peace and harmony, you are respected right away. You are talking peace. We are sisters. And that has opened the door for peace and love and harmony between this people and that people. To achieve that, some people will say, ok we will send our performance group, to show you our culture. Some people will say, let's have a trade delegation, or sport exchange, high school exchange, which, at the end of the day, award the relation understanding and peace.

SI's conviction that meeting and talking together will indirectly build peace is one of the primary features of the concept component of the sister city model, and is suggestive of the operation of a boundary object, but the logistics were still imprecise. I asked him to clarify the exact process through which talking to diverse others builds peace and, as Vic Alhadeff had done for the opposing argument, he emphasised the importance of *voice*. For SI, direct people-to-people contact was essential for bypassing blockages set in place not only by national governments, but also by commercial interests in the media.

SI: First of all, the media from both sides, they always write stories to tell about war, tell about conflict, tell about everything for their own benefit and regimes. And where is the voice of the people? Where is the voice of peace? Where is the voice of movements working for peace and harmony? I can tell you, through sister cities you have that voice. If you go to Jaffa for example, you will see that the Arabs and Christians and Israelis are together, supporting each other, and it's everywhere! They live there as brothers. The media are very reluctant to report what is going on there. The media always look for bad stories. If, any time, you go to Israel, you will see a very strong peace movement there, different politics. [Through sister city activities] you use the media to write about this. As a councillor, I have the platform to speak on behalf of the community; they elected me to do that. I can always use our humble newsletter, or the meetings we have which are covered by the local newspapers, to send a message.

BL: How much effect can that have when the two governments are not at peace?

SI: Look, this is a small scale of politics, but it can grow. Because you're talking peace, you discover that the benefits of peace are going to be for your government, wherever you are. It's more than enough to see yourself building bridges between two different communities, for peace, for harmony, for understanding, setting goals to achieve.

SI then turned his attention to constraints imposed by fiscal realities on the activities of local councils and on the ideals conveyed by the sister city concept, explaining that the reciprocity central to such relationships is hampered by the limited funds allocated by Marrickville council for sister city activities. This had left him feeling a degree of discomfort about the level of hospitality his council was able to offer to delegations from sister cities, especially in the light of his personal vision of local needs driving an international scope for local councils.

SI: After what we've seen in Syria and Cyprus and everywhere we go, we were highly respected, we are the guests of honour everywhere, and here in Australia we have the tradition that we only invite them to one or two lunches and a reception to set the agreement and that's it. I understand we have different cultures. People say, you are wasting money, what is its relevance to Marrickville? Why don't you fix the park? My response is that it's a really important job for council to look at the infrastructure, the environment, the buildings etcetera, but also we have to look at the communities who live in our area, what they think about keeping a cultural bridge between Australia, the new country for them, and the country they came from.

I asked SI about the degree of negative publicity that the Marrickville-Bethlehem proposal had attracted in the news media. Since it had the backing of the local community he represented, he did not understand it in any sense as a risky endeavour, framing it instead, as the proponents of the Olympia proposal had done, as a positive opportunity. He expressed a reluctance to comment on opposition to the project on the parts of the media and the Jewish Board of Deputies, based on his conviction that negative public comments on the views of others only serves to intensify existing conflict. Instead, he preferred to emphasise the peaceful goals of the sister city initiative and his personal commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict at all scales. As the previous mayor, Morris Hanna, had done when formalising the relationship, he foregrounded Australia's commitment to multiculturalism as the basis of a culture of peace.⁷

SI: Ninety-nine percent of the Marrickville community supports this very important sister city relationship. I am about building sister cities on a vision, which is about peace and harmony. And when you want to talk about peace,

⁷ For a discussion of the complexities of enacting the Australian 'multicultural' ideology at the level of local government, see Dunn et al, 2001.

you should do it in a peaceful way. I was able to attack all of the people who started to work against the sister city, but I don't believe in that. I do believe that we should really work together. On sister cities day, we have all the communities of the sister cities in Marrickville; all these groups get together, and ambassadors come to it and they all speak about peace and harmony. Some people are too scared to have a sister city relation because they know nothing about it. I'm proud of being a good humanitarian person. I am Australian. I have values, Australian values, and I want to promote that culture, the acceptance, the multiculturalism, the understanding. We have something great and I want people everywhere to learn about us and the sister city is part of that.

SI's approach to the Marrickville-Bethlehem relationship was, in every respect, an expression of his confidence in the people-to-people principles put forward by Eisenhower and reproduced in current sister city discourses. In facilitating harmonious contact between the people of his municipality and the people of Bethlehem, he was, in Eisenhower's terminology, helping ordinary people to give voice to their common desire for peace. In bypassing the oppositional stances of national governments, he was "leaping governments, if necessary" in order to build a better world. For SI, sister city relationships provided a potent and accessible structure for addressing the global concerns of local citizens.

The Friends of Bethlehem's perspective

A similar position was taken by Jennifer, the local peace activist whose views on the uncontroversial nature of the proposal were noted at the beginning of this chapter. Jennifer was also a resident of Marrickville, and had supported the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city relationship from its inception. She is also a founding member of a local grass roots peace group called *Friends of Bethlehem*, which was formed in order to support the Marrickville council in the face of opposition to the sister city relationship on the parts of non-local

‘outsiders’. The Friends of Bethlehem web page states that the group “encouraged Marrickville Council to engage Bethlehem as a sister city and their efforts to support the people of Bethlehem to live in peace”. “If these efforts can help to let the people of Bethlehem know that others do care about their plight” the post continues, “then we have achieved something for the humanity of the world” (*Friends of Bethlehem*, 2007). Jennifer and I met in a room provided by the council of the neighbouring municipality of Leichhardt. As I set up the tape recorder, she showed me a Christmas card on sale by her group, which combined religious and political themes in depicting the three wise men of the nativity story, unable to access the city of Bethlehem because of the Israeli-built wall. Jennifer recalled how her first experience of sister city relationships had been associated with happy times travelling the world, including a visit to Palestine.

Jennifer: When you go into lots of places they have a sign, ‘sister city to...’ And you think, that’s interesting! Why would they want to be a sister city with that city? And they might be a sister city with somewhere you’ve been and loved.

Like Cr. Iskandar, Jennifer understood the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city proposal to be a normal and unproblematic application of the sister cities people-to-people model. She had met the Mayor of Bethlehem, and respected him as a distinguished and international figure, and a totally improbable candidate for the role of terrorist sympathiser. Jennifer found suggestions that the sister city relationship linked Marrickville with terrorists irrational, partisan and counterproductive.

Jennifer: The mayor is a man in his seventies. He's a very elegant man. He is someone who travels extensively around the world. He was received by the president of the European Union. He has travelled extensively in the United States, where his children live. He has met the Pope. He's obviously not a security risk, which was the impression being made. However, when he meets these people, the message he gives is not one that Israeli government or their supporters in other countries, want heard by the wider community. This word 'terror' is used a lot to frighten people nowadays. I'm a maths teacher and statistics don't support the fear of terror. If you want to be frightened about getting killed, start worrying about alcohol, road accidents. The assumption is that every Palestinian is a terrorist. Yes, there are terrorists in Palestine; however no-one is looking at the terror caused by the occupation for the occupants of Palestine.

Jennifer was unconcerned about the presence of Hamas on the Bethlehem council, because the objective evidence, as she saw it, together with her own experience, gave her no cause to view this as a threat. Furthermore, it made sound political sense to her for the two councils to communicate across differences of ideology. Her concluding statement draws her argument into the citizen diplomat frame within the sister city concept.

Jennifer: Now they said they were forming links with Hamas. Hamas has political and military wings. Hamas was elected because their political wing was a party that was not corrupt, provided good services and good organisation in local government. However in Bethlehem, they are a minority, five out of twelve. The mayor of Bethlehem is an independent, he's Christian and frankly, as the EU is saying now, it is stupid of people not to work with an elected government even if you don't like them. I mean, Australia has links with the Gaddafi regime and they are not a very pleasant regime. We have links with Indonesia; they are not a pleasant regime. The way to change people is to work with them.

The mayor's perspective

Councillor Dimitrios Thanos (DT), who had been elected mayor of Marrickville after the signing of the sister city agreement with Bethlehem, had been the only councillor to oppose the initiative. Cr. Thanos' profile on the website of the Marrickville City Council noted that he had worked in a professional capacity with indigenous communities and "continues to take time from his own practice each year to volunteer his professional services to remote communities around Australia". We met in the mayoral office, where he situated his opposition to the proposal within the wider context of his disillusionment with the sister city model, as he had personally observed it in practice.

DT: I wouldn't say that I'm against sister cities. I'm against the existing model that exists in Marrickville. I was once a supporter of sister cities generally, because I believed that it fostered friendship between communities, gave opportunities to open up different sorts of cultural experiences between communities in different continents, and all the usual jargon that comes along with sister cities. I was a believer at one stage.

The event that had prompted Mayor Thanos to re-evaluate his support for sister city programs was the same one that Cr. Iskandar had identified as confirming in *his* mind the peace building capacity of the sister city model. However, DT's conclusion had been that the sister cities visit had ultimately emerged as a pointless exercise that had drained scarce council funds from other, more pressing activities.

DT: I voted against it on the grounds that we have seven sister cities and none of them are functional and why create another one. I went on a sister city trip to Lanarca in Cyprus and Safita in Syria. It was one trip and we made two

sister cities. And I heard the usual rhetoric – oh, it's not going to be an agreement on paper alone, we're going to set up student exchange programs, sports exchange programs, we're going to set up email and pen-pal exchanges between schools, cultural exchange, artists' exchange programs, stuff like that, and none of that has happened. The Australians were saying it and so were the Syrians. Everyone was saying the usual stuff: we're going to set up all these programs and aren't we going to be fantastic, and we were going to foster friendship between our communities, and it just doesn't happen.

BL: Why doesn't it happen, do you think?

DT: It's budgeting. You need a significant budget to set up these programs and you need an employee who is dedicated to those tasks. And it's a really low priority item when you're talking about budgeting in relations to matters that matter to the public that lives here. People are more concerned with local issues as opposed to international issues when it comes to local government and I agree with that point of view. I don't want to spend a hundred thousand dollars a year on sister city programs when that hundred thousand dollars a year can go into programs for senior citizens, like a cultural centre, so they have somewhere to go, somewhere to read a paper, enjoy companionship between friends, meet new friends, set up things like programs for schools that senior citizens can go to as well; woodwork programs, things like that. We have so many things that we should be spending money on for local residents, that sister cities comes with a very low priority.

DT had other reasons for feeling discomfited by the trip. In his view, expectations raised at a higher political scale were confounded by budgetary constraints, limiting Marrickville's capacity to fulfil the reciprocity norms that help sustain the city model in practice. He explained that the sister city relationship between Marrickville and Safita had been initiated at the international rather than local scale of politics in Syria, and that this had had significant ramifications for the resources that each partner was prepared to invest in the relationship.

DT: With Safita, the Syrian government requested that we set up some sort of agreement. I don't know why they selected Marrickville council. The embassy staff knew some of the councillors and spoke with them here and that's why they set it up. But see, Syria's got political reasons for wanting to engage the West and their view of sister cities is, if they can engage us on that level, it bypasses the federal blocks that exist on any dealings with Safita, Syria. My problem with all that is that the Syrians view sister city agreements seriously, and councillors take advantage of that.

Furthermore, the high level of hospitality that Cr. Iskandar had interpreted as a demonstration of friendship and honour was for Cr. Thanos a source of considerable embarrassment.

DT: On the trip to Syria, we were treated like royalty. We were taken around all of Syria, we were given five star, seven star treatment; that's the best hotels, the best food. We were driven around, we had a police escort. They closed down streets in Damascus so we could get through without problems of traffic and stuff like that, and I find it embarrassing. I find it embarrassing that we cannot reciprocate to the level that the Syrians would like, and their purposes go a lot deeper than our councillors, which is pretty much, it's a junket. People paid for their own airfares, but while we were over there, we didn't spend a dollar. I went there with money, expecting to pay for hotels, to pay for my own meals and so on and I wasn't allowed to touch anything. When we were going through the streets of Damascus I went into some shops and the Syrian handlers were coming in and they were going to pay for things that I may have wanted, and I was like "it's not..!" [Holds hands up in mock defensive gesture and laughs uncomfortably.] ... All our passes to archaeological sites, everything was covered. It was just done. And I find that embarrassing. We can't reciprocate at that level. They view these international agreements much more seriously than we do.

BL: Seriously in what respect?

DT: Well you see, Syria is being boycotted by the West and they want to create an image of tolerance to the West, and of inclusion. And Syria is a fantastic place, mind you. I mean the Western view of Syria is that they're fundamentalists and they're not. They're probably one of the more moderate Muslim states in the Middle East and they want Westerners to see this ... Their foreign minister has come here and we actually put something on in the main hall when she was here. It was very nice and very good to have such a relationship with them, but really, I'm embarrassed. We cannot reciprocate the level of care that they took.

For Cr. Thanos, sister city relationships optimally involved interactions between ordinary citizens of diverse communities, with councillors playing only a supportive role at the local level. In his estimation, the rhetoric surrounding the sister city concept will remain at the level of rhetoric so long as it is councillors rather than citizens who do the travelling.

DT: I'd prefer a model in which things happen between the communities that doesn't involve just councillors travelling abroad. Everybody looks for an excuse to justify their going abroad on council business. And the fact is that no-one needs to travel abroad on council business in their function as councillor or as mayor. I've got no problem against Palestinian people, although a lot of people tried to portray me as such when I was voting against it. I'd support a concerned Palestinian group that believes very strongly in Palestinian issues to go over there and have an exchange of ideas and experiences with the people who actually live in Bethlehem. That's what engenders friendship between communities. And those people who go over there come back. They speak to their friends about their experiences. It's not council going over the top of everyone. That's how you build relationships and foster friendship, not by the elected councillors going once every couple of years abroad.

While Councillor Iskandar and Jennifer had primarily valued local opinion, DT was also concerned about the reaction of the media and people outside the Marrickville local government area to the Bethlehem proposal, and of opposition to the idea of sister cities in general. I asked him whether he thought media reports of a shocked public reaction had been exaggerated.

DT: There *was* a shock reaction, not probably so much from locals, but there was a very large response from the media. I got 2UE and 2 GB and everyone. People were interested, people were calling the radio stations, local residents, telling them what they thought of councillors creating new sister cities. It was a very negative reaction from the public in creating new sister cities, especially such as political city in Palestine. Mind you, I don't have a problem with Palestine *per se*, I've got a problem with the fact the sister city agreements are non-functional; there hasn't been any positive exchange or nothing positive has actually come out of them. And until council actually decides to fund the sister cities program, I won't have a bar of it.

In his capacity as mayor, DT was untroubled by the demarcation aspect of criticisms directed against Marrickville councillors by Federal politicians over the sister city agreement, but he was concerned about issues of substantiation and the reputational risk that the comments by the Foreign Minister had engendered for Marrickville council.

BL: Alexander Downer has made a statement about the Bethlehem link apparently, that Marrickville council is foolish to associate itself with people that support terrorist organisations. What would be your response to this sort of intervention in local government affairs?

DT: Well I'm sure Alexander Downer would have said that it's local government intervening in international affairs! Saying that someone supports terrorism is an easy thing to do. I don't know how true that is. I'm not saying

that Alexander Downer is making it up, but my understanding is that that people who were here do not endorse terrorism and don't endorse terrorist acts. That's a very big statement by the former Foreign Minister. If the former Minister does have solid information, then he can present it to council and councillors will make up their minds. It's very easy to make a statement and tarnish someone's reputation, whether they've got evidence or not and I'd rather see something backed by evidence as opposed to just a broad, sweeping statement like that.

DT acknowledged that some sister city relationships are more active than others, but considered that the kinds of activities they promote, such as school exchanges, do not go far enough to empower all members of each international city as potential participants.

DT: There are *some* functional sister cities. I mean, the Japanese tend to take these things seriously and put a lot of effort into them. It's not that far, so I think they set up exchange programs amongst the schools. But I'm not aware of any sister city agreements that have substantial community exchanges, and therefore fostering world peace and harmony. If you don't get the community involved, you're not fostering anything. If it's just an excuse for councillors to go abroad and come back and say what wonderful things they learned, well that's not enough. Either citizens go, get involved, community organisations that involve the citizens, and have exchange between *them* and overseas, as well as the government exchange, as well as the bureaucratic exchange, or there's just no point to them. And what do you budget for? Do you budget for the needs of the elderly, or do you budget for something that is really the domain of the Federal government under the Foreign Minister?

BL: So you see these sorts of issues as outside...

DT: They're outside the *normal* function of council. It's not core business of council - it's an addition to it. And it's great in theory, but whether it works or not is a different story altogether. If you ask me out of all the sister cities which ones we *should* have, well, if we're genuine in terms of social justice,

we would say the Palestinian one and probably the Syrian one. The rest, I'm looking at them and saying, fair enough, they were made, they were developed with good intentions, but whether or not there's something genuine to be gained out of them is a different issue altogether. The ones with serious political connotations, like Palestine, like Safita, you also need funding for things like that to work, and if funding is not forthcoming, then we need to think seriously about what we are doing in creating new sister cities.

Unusually for an opponent of sister city relationships, Mayor Thanos had specifically identified politically motivated relationships as the most worthy and authentic expression of the sister cities concept. In explaining his position, he drew on a version of the Eisenhower story, and cited links that had been fostered between U.S. and Soviet cities created during the Cold War. He also considered the tripartite sister city arrangement suggested by some opponents of the Olympia-Rafah sister city project to constitute a means of avoiding divisive political partisanship at the level of local governance.

BL: So the fact that they are politically sensitive is a reason *for* pursuing them in your opinion?

DT: Yes. Sister cities were developed by Eisenhower's wife when he was President. And the reason for the first sister cities - I can't remember which ones they were, but there was one in Russia and one in America during the height of the Cold War. It was set up in a way that it was a low level contact, so that there could be cultural exchanges and political exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States of America at a very low level, and that way, create friendship and understanding between communities, and therefore, hopefully, avoid a nuclear disaster. That's the philosophy and rationale behind that and if we hope to follow through to today, well then you'd pick controversial sister cities so you could have cultural exchange. And another thing, if you're going to pick one side, why not pick a town on the other side? So we've got an Israeli-Palestinian conflict, well, fine with Bethlehem, let's pick a Jewish township and have a sister city agreement with

them as well ... You can create quite a statement by making a sister city, just as what happened with Bethlehem in Palestine. The councillors who supported it wanted to make a political statement and that statement reverberated all around Australia.

Again citing financial constraints, Mayor Thanos went on to express scepticism regarding the currently widely expressed argument that economically focused sister city relationships, in particular with Chinese cities, could benefit local councils and urban communities.

DT: I question whether or not agreements between councils do actually create a financial, economic advantage. I don't see how that's going to create business interests between China and Australia. That's something that's above the level of council. Economic benefit requires economic policy, which is the domain of the state and federal governments. For council to create business opportunities, well councils like Marrickville do not have enough a big enough budget to actually set aside money to create investment opportunities. Businesses follow profit, and if they see a business opportunity here in Australia, they'll be here whether there's a sister city agreement or not. Business has been going on for so many centuries; it hasn't needed sister city agreements.

Postscript

The year after the sister city agreement was signed, Marrickville Council made plans to visit its new municipal sister in Palestine. Learning of this development, the new Labor government of Australia, led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, warned the council - apparently indirectly through the media, in the manner of its predecessor - that it risked breaking the law if it met with "representatives of terrorist organisations" in Bethlehem. Foreign Minister Stephen Smith also warned the delegation it was a criminal offence to provide support or resources to [proscribed terrorist] Palestinian groups. "I urge the

Marrickville Council to be mindful of the Australian Government's policy when meeting with relevant members of the Bethlehem Council," Mr Smith said ...Opposition foreign affairs spokesman Andrew Robb said he was "very concerned" by the visit. "The Marrickville Council should reconsider any visit to meet with the Bethlehem Council and should denounce any association with terrorist organisations" (Salusinszky, 2008).

In February of the following year, Marrickville Council approved a motion put forward by Greens councillor Cathy Peters, that it would write to the Australian government, the Israeli Ambassador and the Representative of the Palestinian Territories in Australia, condemning the Israeli occupation of Gaza and violence on both sides of the conflict, and calling for more equitable treatment for Palestinians (Marrickville City Council, 2009). Eight months later, an interfaith ceremony for Peace and Justice in Palestine and Bethlehem was planned, to be held in a local church. As reported by Ainsworth (2009), the ceremony was designed to involve

Palestinian representatives and faith leaders from Christian, Muslim and possibly other groups, as well as Aboriginal people. The Mayor and religious leaders from Bethlehem have sent pre-recorded messages and Al Jazeera television will be recording the ceremony for transmission through its networks. The ceremony is supported by Marrickville Council and the Mayor and many Councillors will be present.

Through such activities, Marrickville council was explicitly positioning itself as an independent peace actor on the global, as well as the international, stage.

Theoretical implications

The wide range of perspectives expressed by the various participants who engaged in the Bethlehem Marrickville debate demonstrates that, as was the case with the Olympia-Rafah proposal, participants' understandings as to the proper nature and scope of sister city relationships, and of council's role in relation to them, were ambiguous, conflicting and often incompatible. Despite encountering very similar obstacles to those that had derailed the Olympia proposal, however, the Bethlehem project was brought to a successful conclusion. Far from being 'overwhelmed', as one press report had suggested, the municipality of Marrickville had held fast to the reins of control throughout the entire procedure, at least within the Australian context. Unconcerned by indirect censure from the Federal government, it had also fended off opposition from the media and the Jewish Board of Deputies. Within the theoretical framework posited by Hilgartner (1991), the Bethlehem-Marrickville sister city relationship can thus be understood to have emerged as an 'emplaced', but successfully 'resisted', risk object.

As will be recalled from the discussion in chapter two of this study, Hilgartner (1992) argues that risk objects can come to be emplaced through 'construction', or being successfully linked to putative harm, as occurred in the case of the Olympia-Rafah proposal. However they can also be emplaced "through resistance to control; that is, if heterogeneous engineers cannot remove them from the system or enclose them in networks of control" (1992:49). In the context of the Marrickville proposal, the 'heterogeneous engineers' had been the Australian Federal Government, the news media and the Jewish Board of Deputies. Its capacity to resist the control measures

mobilised by these powerful opponents identifies the council as a social and political institution of considerable strength within multi-scalar contexts. While the data suggest that the primary reason for the success of the Bethlehem sister city proposal at the *local* scale is that it encountered no significant opposition within the Marrickville jurisdiction, the resilience of this council to pressure from wider scales has significant implications for theorising civic engagement at the international-local interface.

Chapter Five: The Leichhardt-Hebron sister city proposal

Background to the proposal

In the inner west municipality of Leichhardt, which borders on Marrickville, a local pro-Palestinian peace group had been following developments in the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city proposal since its inception. Greatly encouraged by the successful outcome of that initiative, members of the Leichhardt Peace group approached their own council a short time later, requesting consideration of what O'Toole (1999, 2000) calls a 'sister city type relationship' - a generic term denoting city to city partnerships with similar goals and structures - with the Palestinian West Bank city of Hebron. As their spokesperson, Carole, explained, the group was seeking a formalised city partnership, but had been unsure as to whether a sister city relationship or friendship agreement would better serve their goals. They had seen the potential for these goals realised through the sister city model in Marrickville, whereas in Leichhardt, an established friendship agreement with Maliana seemed to be serving the same purpose. The indeterminate and to some extent arbitrary nature of the conceptual boundary distinguishing sister cities and friendship agreements contributed to the classificatory confusion that characterised the ensuing debate.

Unlike the Marrickville proposal, the Leichhardt-Hebron proposal was derailed in its formative stages. The only source of local opposition to this project emanated from the Inner West Chavurah, an informal group of Jewish people living in the Leichhardt area, who had met regularly for the past twenty years for social and cultural activities. I address in detail the perspective taken by the Inner West Chavurah at the end of this chapter, since it can be better

understood within the context of the nature or 'habitus' (Lee, 1997) of the municipality and the interactions of the group with other stakeholders. These were primarily officials from Leichhardt council and members of a local pro-Palestinian peace group, some of whom had formed a separate group named 'Friends of Hebron' by the time the interviews for this study took place.

If cities can be understood to have identities shaped by their enduring patterns of response to historical phenomena, the municipality of Leichhardt could have been expected to be favourably inclined towards a politically contentious sister city relationship. As noted by Lee (1997),

(h)ow a city chooses to spend its budget, the ways in which it uses its land space and the way it tends to envisage its physical landscape, how it sees fit to preserve and predict its history and heritage, the emphasis it places on the collective welfare of its citizens, the choices it makes over styles of civic and public architecture, and so on, are all conditioned by a sort of governing logic which is not merely reducible to the actions of say a particular local government but actually constitutes the outcome of the 'guiding hand' of habitus a sometimes conscious, reflected upon and debated cultural disposition which is lived through and expressed concretely in its citizenry and public and private institutions (1997:134).

The municipality of Leichhardt incorporates the suburbs of Annandale, Balmain, Glebe and Leichhardt, all of which were once working class, but have since been transformed by processes of gentrification. Like Madison in the United States, Leichhardt has a reputation as a prosperous and politically 'left leaning' municipality. As SM, the council's Media Public Affairs Officer, explained, the area is home to a high population of supporters of the Greens and the left wing of the Labor party, and the council has long been at the forefront of Australian local authorities in developing environmental

sustainability strategies. It has a growing population, as like-minded people continue to be drawn to the area in order to partake in the rich civic life to be found there. In some respects, SM saw his own official role as a product of this political and demographic profile.

BL: Why does Leichhardt council need a media public affairs officer?

SM: Because of the way this council operates. Some of the councillors are very progressive, so they make decisions and policies which are a bit out of the ordinary compared with other councils in other areas.

BL: So it attracts more media attention.

SM: Yes, and also with the community, there are quite a few people who work in the media, like journalists, who live here, so if they are writing a story about a local government issue, they'll come to their own council first. ... The councillors here are very switched on internationally. They know what's going on in the world and some have interests in certain areas of the world in terms of trouble spots. Some are interested in European affairs, some are interested in South American affairs, some are [interested in] Asian affairs. They've got interests in certain countries which they will continue from outside of being a councillor or before they even become a councillor they will bring that into council. And I think it's very healthy that they bring that in, because it goes beyond just thinking about localised issues. They'll still focus on that, but they've got a broader scope of how they would like to see the world operate.

Whereas Councillor Sam Iskandar had stressed the need for Marrickville council to create programs that reflected the multicultural interests and agendas of his municipality's high migrant population, SM emphasised instead the importance of council being attuned to lifestyle factors as a basis for sound urban governance in his particular municipality. While the primary focus of

council is by definition and by law local, he explained, there is a need for municipal councils to expand the scale of their activities to reflect the cosmopolitan preferences and concerns of the citizens that they have been elected to represent.

SM: Local councils are governed by state legislation and the New South Wales Local Government Act is very clear on what a council should be focusing on, in terms of how it should operate, in terms of financial responsibilities, how they can raise revenue and what they can spend it on in terms of providing services to the community. But it's not prescriptive in stopping things like this from happening, from creating sister city relationships or allowing a council to be a bit more outward focused in terms of how they want to reflect how the community feels about particular issues. This area is very upwardly mobile; it's got a very affluent community that does a lot of travelling, a lot of overseas focus, and I think the council also has to reflect that in how it's representing the community.

Echoing the contexts in Madison, Olympia and Marrickville, the sister city model had been adopted by the Leichhardt peace group, in their view unproblematically, as a framework for building peace and social justice across cultural and political divides, and Leichhardt council had been quick to endorse the proposal. As noted by SM, it accorded with a long-term interest in Middle East social justice issues on the part of the mayor of Leichhardt at the time, and was unanimously approved by the remaining members of council. A mayoral minute announcing council approval of a sister city relationship was drafted, couched in political language explicitly attributing the plight of the people of Hebron to the Israeli occupation. The document identifies the proposed relationship as an appropriate opportunity for council to extend the scope of its engagement with issues of social justice from East Timor to the

Middle East, and cites the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city relationship, as well as its own friendship agreement with the East Timorese town of Maliana, as precedents.

(T)he trouble in the Middle East continues to get worse with daily reports of death and destruction, violence and suicide bombers. Leaving Iraq aside, the escalating violence is being felt no more so than in Palestinian territories which have suffered years of destruction and occupation by Israeli forces. As with Maliana in Timor Leste, Council and community groups can work with local districts in Hebron to help put in place the infrastructure required for a modern democratic state. It can facilitate friendships and relationships between organisations and groups in the two cities; e.g. schools, churches, sporting groups (Leichhardt Municipal Council, 2007:4).

The minute goes on to identify a single obstacle to implementing a sister city relationship with Hebron, namely the absence of a supporting civic infrastructure in that city as a result of devastation wrought by the occupation. In the perception of Leichhardt city council at that time, therefore, the problems they would encounter would be purely logistical.

Leichhardt has led the way in establishing friendship relationships between local government in NSW and districts in Timor-Leste. In Palestine, as in Timor-Leste, many of the institutions of civil society have destroyed by many years of military occupation. This means that it may be difficult to establish formal relationships between the municipalities. However the experience of working with Maliana in Timor-Leste means Leichhardt now has the opportunity to pioneer a similar, supportive relationship with a city in Occupied Palestine. The Municipality of Marrickville has agreed to establish a sister city relationship with Bethlehem, now cut off by the wall. It is appropriate that the neighbouring municipality of Leichhardt establish a sister city relationship with a neighbouring Palestinian town (Leichhardt Municipal Council, 2007:4).

As was standard practice, a copy of the minute was sent to the local branches of political parties. At this point, the proposal came to the attention of Jewish groups and individuals for the first time. Upon viewing the document, a Jewish member of the Labor party, who also belonged to the Inner West Chavurah, immediately identified the initiative as a potential source of harm to the Jewish community, and set in motion the process of risk amplification by alerting the Chavurah, as well as Vic Alhadeff at the Jewish Board of Deputies. Once more, Mr. Alhadeff swung into action, in order to counter the threat he considered the relationship would pose to the people he had been assigned to protect. Articles began to appear in the mainstream and local press, mostly condemning the proposal, which was generally identified as a sister city rather than a friendship initiative.

News reports included a story in *The Daily Telegraph* under the heading 'It's the Inner West Bank' (Kaye, 2007), in which it was claimed that 'furious inner west ratepayers' had 'taken on the council' over the proposal, and that the mayor of the Eastern Sydney municipality of Waverly had written to his Leichhardt counterpart, demanding that the project be abandoned. Waverly is a prosperous area on Sydney's Eastern shore, which contains the city's highest proportion of Jewish residents, and the Jewish mayor of that municipality was due to stand for re-election in the near future. Cautionary comparisons were drawn with the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city 'controversy', which the journalist erroneously claimed to have 'engulfed' neighbouring Marrickville. Quotes from VA highlighted the symbolic nature of the threat posed by the Leichhardt initiative and the inappropriate choice of sister city partner. "The real issue here is the symbolic import of what it's

doing," he said. "It's taking a clear partisan political stance. This is very different to twinning with London or Paris" (Kaye, 2007). Writing for the *Australian*, the journalist Imre Salusinszky also quoted VA, in this instance as claiming that "the council had been led astray by a hard Left group and had no business getting involved in the global arena in a partisan political way". Salusinszky's article also conveys the words of the mayor of Waverley in more detail, calling attention to the risk posed to Leichhardt residents of symbolic contamination by association with the 'morally polluted' council of Hebron.

George Newhouse, the Mayor of Waverley Council, in Sydney's eastern suburbs, said a sister-city relationship between Leichhardt and Hebron would be a gross abuse of ratepayer funds and trust ... (W)hen informed of the content of the motion passed by council, Mr. Newhouse said its language was inflammatory and indicated a greater commitment of financial and in kind support than a mere fundraising exercise. "Do they know who's on Hebron council?" Mr. Newhouse said. "Do they know who runs that place? And what protections are in place to ensure the council isn't dealing with people with blood on their hands?" (Salusinszky, 2007).

The print version of Kaye's (2007) article in the Daily Telegraph was accompanied by two photographs, juxtaposing contrasting images of cosmopolitan Leichhardt and what Carole, a spokesperson from Friends of Hebron, later identified as probably a refugee camp outside war-torn Hebron (see Figure 5 below). In the online version, these images flashed alternately, accompanied by captions that had not appeared in the print version. One of these misleadingly assigns a distressed Palestinian woman in the foreground of the photograph, who is more likely to be a refugee, the debased status of an 'old beggar'.



Leichhardt ... famous for Dawn Fraser, Wests Tigers, pasta and Italian soccer fans



Hebron ... famous for grapes, pottery workshops and, er, old beggars

Figure 5. 'It's the Inner West Bank' (*The Daily Telegraph*, May 26, 2007)

The Friends of Hebron's perspective

Like other proponents of sister city relationships with Palestinian cities, Carole held a strong belief in the capacity of the sister city model to address issues of international peace and reconciliation. In her case, this was rooted in her childhood socialisation. She recalled the controversy that had surrounded a proposal for a sister city relationship between the large rural city where she had grown up and a Japanese city, due to the lingering stigmatised status of the Japanese as wartime enemies. She had seen this opposition overcome,

however, by a wider local commitment to international peace and friendship, and remembered sister city relationships as “a big part of municipal and community life” at the time. “We were always taught about it at school” she remembered. “It was about community building It was a matter of great pride that Australia would reach out to a city in the United States, in Germany or Japan”. Although Carole believed that the Leichhardt-Hebron proposal was a legitimate expression of the peace building sister city model that had inspired her in her school days, the strong reaction to the Marrickville proposal on the parts of the Federal government and the media had prepared her for a hostile response, which she understood as a racist bias against Palestinians in general. “Palestinians are regarded as subhuman in Australia by certain parts of society” she told me in a tone of exasperation. “One can have a sister city relationship with any city but one cannot have one with a Palestinian city”. She pointed to the cartoon in the Aussie Bagel blog (Figure 3 in the preceding chapter) as an example of the serious threat posed by ignorant and petty expressions of racism, which her peace group was trying to curtail through awareness raising, asking “You know what it looks like? Like one of those terribly anti-Semitic cartoons in Germany in the thirties. With the hooked nose and the beard ... just like one of those appalling Nazi graphics of Jewish people in the 1930s, and we know where that led!”

The recent triumph of the stance taken by Marrickville council in the face of powerful opposition had given Carole hope that a broader base for Palestinian-focused peace projects could be created in Sydney, through an alliance between local ‘sister’ municipalities. “In developing the proposal”, she explained, “we thought that the two councils were sister, adjacent, the two

areas in Sydney. And we thought there would be synergies between the two groups; Bethlehem and Hebron and Leichhardt and Marrickville”. Carole felt confident that her group’s proposal would meet with success in Leichhardt, as she saw clear parallels between the plight of the residents of Maliana in East Timor and that of the people of Hebron in Palestine. Both populations, as she saw it, had been the victims of oppressive occupations, which had left them in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and the moral support that international affirmations of friendship could provide. Her hope was that, if the citizens of Leichhardt were brought to understand that the people of Hebron were struggling for basic survival, they would respond with the same compassionate support that they were extending to the people of Maliana. Carole was intensely committed to relieving the dire situation of what she understood as an unjustly oppressed people and had no doubt as to where the responsibility for the oppression lay. She described the city of Hebron as “increasingly strangled by the wall that Israel is building. Strangled by the Israeli occupation. A claustrophobic, strangled place, that’s how I see it”. She was excited about the kinds of projects that a sister city type relationship could open up for the people of Leichhardt as well as for the people of Hebron.

CL: The Friends of Maliana were involved in information sharing and letting the community know what was happening in East Timor, having film nights and stalls at the local organic market and raising community awareness about how poor people in East Timor were after the Indonesian occupation, and the community was raising money for projects back in Maliana .. So that really gave the idea, this was another model with another city in the occupied West Bank, in every bit as much need as East Timor had been. They [the Friends of Maliana] are mixing with the local schools and involved in raising money for Maliana and getting books for the library. I think that’s great. That would be

great if the local schools were raising money for books for schools in Palestine.

Like Jennifer, Carole saw no evidence that the prospect of forming a sister city relationship with a Palestinian partner was creating the kind of outrage that the mainstream media had been representing as occurring in Marrickville or Leichhardt. Instead, she identified more mundane issues as more common generators of local controversy, and the management of diverse citizen perspectives as a regular and unremarkable aspect of urban governance.

CL: It's only controversial when Imre Salusinszky or the *Australian Jewish News* write about it or the *Daily Telegraph* write about it ... What the community's divided on are like someone's extension that's being built next door and the fact that Leichhardt council have chopped off half the parking in Norton Street. Local government is constantly about division. If you go to any other those meetings, that's what people are divided and going on about - the council's put up our rates and they've blocked up the street. Leichhardt's got parking meters – that was the most divisive decision in Leichhardt council - putting in parking meters. Some in the community wanted it and some didn't.

Redirecting her attention to the national level of politics, Carole told me that a freedom of information request had been lodged regarding Australian Federal government intervention in the visa application of the mayor of Bethlehem, which had resulted in the disruption of his delegation's travel arrangements and speaking commitments. She dismissed the argument put forward in the media and by Federal government officials to the effect that local governments exceed their capacity by engaging in international affairs. Instead, she suggested that the Australian government was the political actor out of its

depth on the international stage in comparison with other global actors, and that framing sister city proposals as interference in international affairs is a misguided interpretation of what are essentially local to local connections.

CL: The mayor of Bethlehem is a well respected Christian gynaecologist and his project has been endorsed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and people far more eminent and well known on the international stage than Alexander Downer! ... No-one 's engaging in international affairs. Engagement in international affairs is the province of government foreign affairs departments. Why is this said because one is engaging with a Palestinian city?

Ultimately, she noted, local peace groups in democratic countries do not depend on the approval of local authorities in order to carry out their political and humanitarian activities, but official approval of such initiatives at the level of local government can confer symbolic benefits that make the effort of navigating oppositional stances worthwhile. While local and international media coverage had represented the original mayoral minute as tantamount to an official sister city relationship, no formal connection yet existed between Leichhardt and Hebron, as no agreement had been signed. In response to the unanticipated levels of opposition it had received to the Hebron proposal, Leichhardt council had since retreated from the position it had taken in the minute, now insisting that local groups should come to an agreement about projects before seeking official council endorsement. The Friends of Hebron were willing to address this requirement; as Carole explained, council approval of a sister city agreement was needed for the symbolic legitimacy it would bestow upon the people of Hebron. As fictive sisters to the people of Leichhardt, they would be recognised not only as human beings, but as normal people capable of leading a structured and ordered civic life, in contrast to the

fearsome and chaotic existence suggested by the terrorist label, and by the essentialist incompatibilities implied by the juxtaposed photographs in Figure Five, above.

Carole: It's about the community using its own resources; it's not about using council resources at all. It's just moral really, in principle support from council and the use of their meeting rooms. Friends of Hebron can do whatever Friends of Hebron wants. It's not council money. But if we want the imprimatur of the council we're meant to work something out jointly with the Inner West Chavurah. We actually haven't attempted that yet but we'll do that.

BL: So what's the advantage for your project for this to become a sister city agreement or a friendship agreement?

Carole: Because it publicises the plight; it endorses the fact that you *can* have a sister relationship with a Palestinian city. All this negative publicity has been good. I don't regard it as being negative. It's actually brought the issue out into the open. [It means] that Palestinians are people; that they have a government and a municipality and a community; people who eat, drink, go to school. That's what it means- they're like us. That's the whole idea of sister cities.

In summing up her group's position, Carole located the Leichhardt-Hebron sister city proposal within wider political discourses of multiculturalism, globalisation, and the proper moral as well as political and administrative scope of local governments in an interconnected world.

Carole: It's very important in Australia, because we do have an Arab population and a Muslim population. We're a multicultural society. It's very important that we reach out and say "Sydney is a global city and we're a global municipality and we want to build bridges with other people". And it's not just the role of local government to deliver roads and fix potholes in roads.

Local government is the government closest to the people. It's a democratic mission of local government to have happy, safe communities and to do that you need counter racism and demonisation and things like that cartoon, which I find really disturbing. You don't want people like that in the community. You want to have strategies that stop racism and sister cities are just part of that; local government to community. At least sister city relationships enable people from one country to be able to make contact with another and to feel they have some stake in what might be happening, or care about what's happening in another part of the world. And that's certainly what attracted us, looking at friends of Maliana.

The mayor's perspective

A very different understanding of the Leichhardt-Hebron proposal was expressed by Leichhardt mayor Carolyn Allen (CA), who had 'inherited' the issue from her predecessor, Alice Murphy. One of the main problems, in her view, was that, in its enthusiasm to embrace a worthwhile humanitarian project, Leichhardt council had failed to consider the risk implications of endorsing a potentially controversial sister city relationship before approving the mayoral minute.

CA: This came up to a council meeting without any pre-knowledge. It just came up – Let's have a sister city relationship! You wouldn't enter into a contract to buy a house without looking at the contract and talking about it first. You don't even go to a particular school without checking it out.

The uncertainty that had been expressed by Carole as to the appropriate form that Leichhardt's connection with Hebron should take is indicative of the absence of any uniform classificatory system for the various types of sister city type relationships in sister city discourses. The Greater Bendigo City Council (2007), for example, notes that "a Friendship City (in the Sister City context)

can be an official relationship but often is a more informal arrangement with less administrative and financial commitment than is expected of a Sister City (2007:27), while Rutherford (2004) observes that the term can be used to denote an interim stage before a sister city agreement is signed (2004:42). The Australian Sister Cities Association (ASCA) favours the expansion of the term 'sister city relationship' to include all inter-city relationship building activities, such as friendship agreements, economic agreements and other memoranda of understanding (Rutherford, 2000:4)⁸.

In the view of Mayor Allen, however, there was a clear division between the symbolic and practical functions of sister cities and friendship agreements. To her mind, the Hebron proposal fitted more within what she understood as the parameters of friendship agreements than those of sister city relationships. CA interpreted sister city relationships as symbolic expressions of friendship between local councils of equal status, and friendship agreements as directed towards humanitarian support of less fortunate communities, illustrating the difference with reference to Leichhardt's semi-dormant sister city relationship with an Italian town dating back to the 1980s, and to the friendship agreement with Maliana in East Timor that had so impressed the Leichhardt peace group. At the same time, however, she was aware that other members of her own council might define these relationships differently. With respect to the Leichhardt-Hebron proposal, she noted that

(a)s far as I'm concerned, it's not a sister city relationship ... It depends on what you think a sister city is. Leichhardt for a very long time has had a sister city relationship with a town in Italy. For me a sister city is - I suppose if you

⁸ See also Spence (2005) and Kehi (2005) for discussions of Australian-Timorese Friendship Agreements.

had a real sister you'd give them more time - but it's sort of an agreement between equals. It's nothing like what we do in Maliana. To me a sister city relationship is a formal and ceremonial thing. With the city in Italy, we have sent a delegation and that city has sent a delegation here. We gave them a reception; we invited all the local Italian people who had obviously lobbied to have this sister city relationship. It was just a friendship thing ... That's what I believe, but all the other councillors might not. I think that's what a sister city is. I think what they're asking for is more a humanitarian project similar to what we have in Maliana. It's not a sister city, it's a friendship. A friend implies that you're helping someone more than, sister to me is more like, for sharing ... That's what our sister city is like with the town in Italy. To me, sister cities are symbolic. It's more a symbolic thing rather than a real thing.

BL: Do you think there's a common understanding of what sister cities are in Australia?

CA: I don't think so and I don't think there would be a common understanding on our council.

For CA, the entailments of the 'sister cities' metaphor differed from those conveyed in standard sister city discourses. To her mind, friendship was about providing help, which is, as noted earlier in this study, is typically associated with the family/sister metaphor, whereas sisterhood was about friendship, which served a more expressive function. CA went on to explain the historic and political context within which Leichhardt's friendship agreement with Maliana had been established in 2001, and the reasons behind the almost universal support afforded its activities in her local area.

CA: A lot of Australians felt a link to East Timor because our soldiers were there and the East Timorese, the Fretilin, helped out soldiers in the Second World War. So there's a link that's on our part, mostly generosity. Because we didn't have any Indonesians here, we didn't have a conflict here. We had a group in Leichhardt called Friends of Maliana and they raised money with a

lot of community action. It was not an official council thing at this point. They took on the project of refurbishing the library in Maliana and most of the money that did it came from the UN ... They had elections in East Timor several years later and once they had an elected government [there were] various projects from different groups in Australia. There's a person in Australia, the Consul General, who goes round to community groups trying to generate more of these. Two years ago, they developed this thing called a Friendship Agreement, which was devised by the Local Government Association here between us and the East Timorese government. We developed a protocol for this Friendship Agreement and it is agreed that we only do projects that are generated as community projects from that country. We went and visited the officials and we met the chiefs who are like the local councillors and we asked them what sort of things we could help with.

CA's observations draw attention to the multi-scalar character of urban connections that are commonly discursively understood as local-to-local. In practice, sister city relationships can be suggested at any scale, ranging from individual personal connections to national initiatives. In her capacity as elected representative of all of Leichhardt's residents, CA acknowledged the legitimacy of objections received by council to its funding of non-local activities, noting that engagement with issues of social justice at an international level is essentially an optional extra for local authorities.

CA: It's ratepayers' money. A lot of people don't like us spending money in East Timor, not a lot, but some. They would say, you shouldn't be spending my rates money in East Timor. You should be fixing the pothole in the street. And the essence is that the pothole *is* our primary responsibility, legislatively it is ... We give a lot of money to our own community groups and, as I said, we've got to look after the footpaths and the roads. We don't get a lot of rates and I think our priority has to be our own community. I would like to live in a community that cares about the outside world but that is like the icing on the cake.

In addition to the obstacle posed by the conceptual distinctions outlined above, a recent structural development served to undermine further the chances of official endorsement of the Leichhardt-Hebron connection as a sister city relationship. The Australian Local Government Association had recently changed the scale and direction of its focus, and CA noted that there had been “a bit of a directive’ to local councils to confine new sister city initiatives to other Australian municipalities, particularly those in rural areas suffering hardship, rather than wasting scarce resources on overseas travel. CA affirmed the desirability of making sister city connections within Australia, provided that they were aimed at friendship and understanding rather than assistance.

CA: It’s probably best to have one with a group in Australia because we need to understand, maybe, indigenous populations better. If we were going to have another one where they’d call it a sister city relationship, I’d like one with an Australian town that has a big indigenous population. We were one of the first councils to fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag at our council and we have done a lot of initiatives in the last fifteen to twenty years compared with other councils to do with indigenous people. So to improve understanding between people, not an aid thing, about learning about how other people live and have an understanding of them, an empathy.

Although she could see the merits of the Hebron proposal as a friendship agreement, CA was keen to protect Leichhardt council from unnecessary political controversy. Like many other citizens and officials opposed to sister city relationships with Palestinian cities, she understood the term ‘political’ in the context of the Leichhardt-Hebron debate as signifying danger to public order. Officially approving a politically contentious peace initiative was, to her,

tantamount to council voluntarily, unnecessarily and irresponsibly introducing acrimonious division into a hitherto thriving and harmonious municipality.

CA: The essence of the problem is that working on peace is a political thing. If we didn't have competing groups in our own community, I would feel more comfortable about having a humanitarian project in Hebron. The conclusion we've now reached is that we would support projects that came from combined groups in our municipality. We had a local political situation and for me that was entirely the wrong atmosphere to move forward into a humanitarian project. ... It was a nice idea, but it just causes too many problems.

BL: What do you mean by political?

CA: I mean political because the war's still there and we've got people with different opinions of it and it's a conflict within our community. How can we work on peace when the groups are fighting here?

As had been the case in Olympia and Marrickville, Leichhardt council had received significant negative feedback from individuals and groups outside the local area. For Mayor Allen, accusations by the press and the Federal government to the effect that they were associating with terrorists were not an issue; it was the reputational risk posed to council that was her primary concern. It was therefore imperative that council convey a clear impression that it was cognizant of its primary responsibility to promote the wellbeing of the local community it had been elected to govern. To that end, she was determined to distance the council's *name* from controversial international humanitarian projects.

CA: We had press coverage. We had people ringing us. I've had abusive emails. I even had one the other day - I presume all councillors got them. It was just calling us "silly leftists, I hope you all rot", things like that... No-one said to us that terrorists would come in. They were just telling us we were stupid. Our concern was we had different groups in our community and we would be causing friction between them in choosing something specific in Hebron. .. I think for us to be able to spend ratepayers' money on those sort of projects we need a strong, non-council group. My problem is supporting a group when there are other groups that are - it's very emotive, highly political and emotive, and I just think we're creating problems for ourselves. I will support an individual project if they all agree and I could see it's apolitical, but it won't be labelled our project. It will be our council helping a local group do something in Hebron.

The Inner West Chavurah's perspective

In contrast to the relatively smooth trajectory of the Marrickville-Bethlehem proposal at the local level, the Leichhardt-Hebron proposal was a topic of considerable concern for the members of the Leichhardt based Jewish group, the *Inner West Chavurah*. One of their members, Gael, had agreed to be interviewed as a spokesperson for her group. Gael weighed her words very carefully throughout our interview, conscious of her responsibility to represent fairly and correctly the views of an internally diverse collectivity. She asked to begin the interview by explaining the nature and composition of the Inner West Chavurah, as she believed it would help me to understand better the position her group had taken. The Chavurah, which comprises about 140 Jewish people, was formed around twenty years ago, and members come together for social and educational activities and religious festivals. Their perspective in opposing the sister city initiative differed from that taken by the American pro-Israeli

lobby in Olympia, in that the Chavurah shared Friends of Hebron's desire to help the people of Hebron and wanted to work with them to that end.

Gael: Our group is not typical of the mainstream Jewish community. We're not a religious group. We identify as Jewish but many of us have partners who aren't Jewish and we're sort of a social/educational; we get together for Jewish festivals and we do our own celebrations. We all geographically live in the Inner West and we all kind of identify slightly differently than a lot of people who are part of the main stream Jewish community, which often live around the Eastern suburbs. We don't necessarily feel comfortable in a lot of the mainstream stuff. Being in the Chavurah has given us an opportunity to make friends with other Jewish people and do festivals in a way that we feel comfortable with and also to be creative ... Many of us would be doing work with communities, like maybe working alongside aboriginal communities or East Timorese, and we're probably more similar in many ways, we found that we had a lot of common with people in Friends of Hebron, for example.

Gael explained that some members of the Chavurah had been less inclined than others to engage with the Hebron initiative, and that the perspective of those members needed to be honoured and respected. The public stance taken by the Chavurah on the sister city issue had suddenly rendered their hitherto unobtrusive group visible, not only to non-Jewish residents of their own neighbourhood, but also to the wider Jewish community. With these factors, as well as their group's humanitarian ideals, in mind, it was formulating its public response to the Hebron proposal with caution.

Gael: Initially we were very concerned about speaking to the media. We were worried that we would be misrepresented and we *were* misrepresented. Pretty quickly we decided that we needed to tell our own story. If we weren't saying anything, there would be a vacuum that others would jump into. We're a Leichhardt group. We had no elected members. We were not formed in a way that we have spokespeople and to get a mandate from our group took quite a

few meetings. Four of us were given a mandate to run with this and a strategy to deal with the media that we had to work out. And we were very careful to keep reporting back to our constituency, the bigger groups. We had to make decisions about how we would operate democratically within our group.

Gael described her group's position as like "walking a tightrope" in trying to communicate a balanced perspective while taking into account the views of all stakeholders. It was important to Chavurah members to reclaim a debate that they felt was essentially a local matter, but which had been appropriated at non-local scales.

Gael: The majority of us felt that this was our neck of the woods. We are articulate. We are clever people. We can deal with this. And we were concerned that the line of the Jewish Board of Deputies is to stop anything that was critical of Israel. We don't think like that. We wanted to work it our way. This is our council. We're all ratepayers. We felt that if the council was going to put support into something it has to be something that would be good for the people of the municipality. Any sister city thing should be of benefit. And we could see from this there was a possibility that this could be negative and make some members of the community feel more uncomfortable and not benefit.

Gael emphasised that it was not the idea of providing humanitarian assistance that troubled the Chavurah, but the partisan and inflammatory language in which the minute had been expressed. From her perspective, the chain of harm through which the sister city type proposal had become a putative risk to the Jewish community had begun, not with public criticism of the Israeli state *per se*, but with an officially endorsed criticism that was biased and superficial.

Gael: What we did take objection to was the language that the minute was couched in. We also felt concerned that going along the path of the way this minute was framed, starting with fundraising and building up things with sister city relationships could have a negative impact on us in the community, because if these things aren't done carefully, they can lead to anti-Semitism.It's a very fine line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. Some of our members were deeply, deeply concerned and nervous because anti-Semitism is a very emotional topic for a lot of Jewish people, it hurts a lot. A lot of people in the Chavurah have parents who are Holocaust survivors, or family members, so they're one generation from the Holocaust. So they're very sensitive to that.

Of further concern was the risk inherent in the inability of council to impose constraints on real world applications of the city agreement once it had been ratified. One such application that had troubled her group was a proposed public exhibition in the Leichhardt library of photographs depicting the suffering of Palestinians under the Israeli occupation. Since Israelis and Palestinians were both victims and perpetrators of the violence, she reasoned, it was dangerous and unhelpful to attribute blame to either party.

Gael: It would depend on what that meant in reality. What would actually happen? Would it be a plaque on the wall saying 'Sister City of Hebron' or does it mean we invite people and they get up in the town hall and say inflammatory things because they're Hamas people, or do they have exhibitions in libraries that show only one side of the story? ... One of the things that Friends of Hebron wanted to do, and saw it as quite innocently that it would be a good thing to do, would be to have a photographic exhibition in the Leichhardt library about the impact of the Israeli occupation on the people living in Hebron. I'll talk personally now, but I think other people would agree with me. By doing such a thing, people walk in the library, they get there and they see one side of the story. They don't see the towns in Israel being bombed every day from the Gaza strip. They don't see the whole

history, the whole story. Both sides have had been oppressed and both sides are victims of violence and both sides have oppressed the other.

Instead her group sought to “reframe the conflict” in a way that would allow them to move forward together with pro-Palestinian peace groups such as the Friends of Hebron, in order to address the humanitarian crisis caused by the Middle East conflict.

Gael: The position we took, we did a lot of thinking about this. We did not want to just jump on this. We’re not all pro-Israel. A lot of us are very critical of what the Israeli government has done. But where we drew the line was, we were saying that the Middle East is a quagmire, that’s the language we used, it’s a quagmire. And it’s a narrative. And you can start anywhere in that narrative, in any place and put a comma. And you can stop there and show your side of the story. So for everything that you can criticise Israel about, an Israeli or an anti- Palestinian person can put their side of the story and show the same events from their perspective: And where does it take you? Nowhere! It takes you into escalating violence. We were saying “Let’s reframe this, let’s not stomp on it. Let’s see what opportunities exist.”

Like Cr. Iskandar of Marrickville council, Gael’s group was concerned that media discourses of the Middle East conflict were not allowing the voice of peace to be heard around the world, but their perspectives differed with respect to the capacity of the sister cities model to convey that voice. Both supported, in principle, local government engagement with issues of social justice in the Middle East. However, the Inner West Chavurah were concerned that the one-to-one nature of sister city relationships - the symbolic connection of one homogenised urban population with another, in circumstances where one city is in conflict with a third party - necessarily requires sides to be taken.

Furthermore, Gael believed that peace activists living in areas other than the Middle East run the risk of oversimplifying complex issues that they are not in the best position to understand, finding themselves as a consequence “sucked into” never-ending conflict. A much more constructive approach, in her opinion, would be for councils to help peace groups in their municipalities to assist the projects of other organisations, composed of people who actually live and work in the conflict zone, and who are accordingly endowed with the benefit of practical local experience.

Gael: Actually, *other* things are going on in the Middle East around peace building - Palestinians and Israelis getting together and doing good peace-making work. We felt that, if our local council wanted to do anything in the Middle East, it should be about supporting actions towards peace making, where people of good will on both sides are working together. ... We don't need to drag Middle East politics into Leichhardt. We don't live in the Middle East! This is what distresses me more than anything. Why do we need that conflict brought here into Leichhardt, where people all get on? It's a harmonious place. A twin with a Middle East [city], whether it be in Israel, or probably more contentiously, with a Palestinian city, raises a whole lot of conflict. ... We're saying, if you want to do anything in the Middle East, why not look at the people who are reframing the conflict and looking at peacemaking? We searched and we found practical things on the ground where groups are working together, people who are *living* in the Middle East, who are saying “We're sick of conflict. We actually want peace”.

In particular, members of the Inner West Chavurah were inspired by a group known as ‘One Voice’. The web page of that group notes that it is composed of roughly equal numbers of Israeli and Palestinians working together to “amplify the voice of Israeli and Palestinian moderates, empowering them to seize back the agenda for conflict resolution and demand that their leaders achieve a two-

state solution guaranteeing the end of occupation, establishing a viable independent Palestinian state, and ensuring the safety and security of the state of Israel - allowing both people to live in peace with all their neighbours”.

What particularly appealed to the Chavurah was One Voice’s conceptual positioning of the conflict as between the moderate majority and violent extremists on both sides, rather than between Palestinians and Israelis as homogenised groups. In line with this vision, Gael did not endorse a tripartite sister city solution, since she felt that such arrangements perpetuate the kind of ‘us’ and ‘them’ thinking that Chavurah members were trying to overcome.

Gael: They [One Voice] are already light years ahead. Why are we creating conflict in our community based on taking sides in the Middle East when clever people in the Middle East are beyond that? That’s what we believe we ought to be doing. Leichhardt council should be emulating that sort of stuff ... If council’s going to support anything, let it support groups who are working together to support a project that is around peacemaking and shows Palestinians and Israelis working side by side to improve conditions in Hebron.

BL: So you feel that instead of the peace going from the peaceful place here over to there, the conflict is coming from the conflict zone to here?

Gael: Yes, that’s a really important point. That’s what we were feeling was happening.

Gael went on to tell me about a paradoxical situation, in which peace workers from One Voice were travelling from the Middle East to speak at Western universities, in an attempt to defuse the secondary conflict that hostilities in their own area have provoked in the West. From the perspective of her own group, the best course of action for people in the Leichhardt area would be to

listen to peace workers such as these, who have had direct experience of conditions in Israel and Palestine, and ask them for *their* suggestions as to how Australians could best support them in their local activities. Local Australian groups on both sides of the Middle East debate could then come together to play an important but secondary role in improving conditions in the Middle East, with the in-principle support of council. Ultimately, the contention of the Chavurah was that it is unproductive to attempt to establish a direct sister city type relationship between an Australian city and either of two cities that are in conflict, since it only serves to perpetuate existing divisions. “It isn’t about them and us”, she concluded. “It’s about them and them and we try to help”.

Postscript

Soon after I had conducted the interviews for this study, the Friends of Hebron approached the Leichhardt library, seeking permission to mount a public exhibition of photographs depicting the suffering of Palestinian civilians as a result of the Israeli occupation. The exhibition was intended to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the *Nakba*, the Palestinian word for ‘catastrophe’. After viewing the proposed content, the library gave its permission for the display to take place in May of the following year (2008). In the week before the scheduled opening, however, Leichhardt council officials became aware of the planned exhibit, which they believed did not accord with Friends of Hebron’s prior agreement with council to confine themselves to projects that included perspectives from both sides on any contentious topic. After consultation with the Inner West Chavurah, it was decided that the Chavurah would exhibit its own display at the same time and in the same location, in

order to present what council believed would be a balanced and non-divisive point of view to the wider public.

As the final touches were being made to the Friends of Hebron's exhibition, however, two officers from the *Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Group* and the *Community Contact Unit* of the Federal police arrived at Leichhardt library, advising that they were there to view the exhibition, which they had expected to be already on public display. The police officers informed the library staff that they had seen an advertisement for the exhibition on an internet website, and requested contact details for both the Friends of Hebron and the Inner West Chavurah. They then left the library, advising that that they would return to view the photographs at a later time.

As noted in the official report of Leichhardt council,

(t)he following morning the Director of Corporate & Information Services attended the Library. After calling the General Manager and Mayor to discuss the contents, a joint decision was taken to postpone both the exhibition by the Friends of Hebron as well as the exhibition planned for display by the Inner West Chavurah, until the groups could meet with the panel of Councillors. There was concern that the exhibition material, particularly the text around the photos, could be divisive, and therefore not in accordance with the Council policy. There was also some concern as to whether a public library was the appropriate place for the exhibitions, as opposed to a hall or gallery where people could make a choice as to whether they wished to view them. The Friends of Hebron and the Inner West Chavurah were contacted and informed of the decision and the need for a combined meeting of the two groups with the panel of Councillors (Leichhardt Municipal Council Report, 23 May 2008).

This story was immediately taken up by the mainstream news media, often in a tone of incredulity. The ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) radio

program *PM* reported that the police had “swooped on’ the exhibition, and were now in damage control over accusations of McCarthyism (Bourke, 2008). The *Sydney Morning Herald* responded with scepticism to a claim by the Media Office of the Federal Police that the counter-terrorism officers had merely called in to “say hi to Friends of Hebron members” (Ramachandran, 2008). In line with his unwavering support for the Israeli cause, a dissonant interpretation was expressed by the Australian journalist Imre Salusinszky, who framed the incident instead as a betrayal of council trust on the part of the Friends of Hebron group (Salusinszky, 2008).

Theoretical implications

Like the Olympia-Rafah sister city proposal, the Leichhardt-Hebron proposal had become emplaced as a risk object through the process of ‘construction’ (Hilgartner, 1991), having been successfully linked to putative harm at the local scale and consequently removed from the formal agenda of council. While opposition at the local scale had been much less confrontational in Leichhardt than that encountered by the Olympia council, with the Inner West Chavurah expressly seeking to work with the Friends of Hebron, Leichhardt Council nevertheless responded to the irrefutable evidence that its own municipality was divided over the issue of the proposed relationship. As with the other initiatives explored in this study, the interest groups concerned, as well as elected officials within city councils, expressed different understandings as to the proper nature and scope of sister city relationships, and of the mutual obligations of council and citizen groups in relation to them. Once again, the sister city model was revealed to be highly flexible, in that it allowed for multiple interpretations across domains, but insufficiently robust to

create a boundary object, since no core semantic component remained stable in all contexts.

The closure of the photographic exhibition and its aftermath call into question the utility of local peace groups applying for official council endorsement of controversial sister city projects. In seeking the symbolic legitimacy afforded by an elected government's recognition of solidarity with a Palestinian city, the Friends of Hebron had succeeded in calling public attention to human rights issues at both national and international scales. At the same time, however, they had effectively constrained their own capacity to act within a local context. Particularly in the light of Marrickville's subsequent motion condemning Israeli aggression in Gaza (see chapter four), the effects of escalating Federal government intervention in sister city relationships between Australian and Palestinian cities is suggestive of a need for future research into contested sister city proposals in Australia.

Chapter Six: American-Iraqi sister city relationships

Background to the relationships

As will be recalled from chapter two of this study, this thesis posits the ideal case scenario for peace-building sister city relationships as the ‘boundary object’, through which productive communication is achieved without requiring interpretive consensus on the parts of cooperating social groups. The ‘constructed’ risk objects exemplified by the Olympia-Rafah and Leichhardt-Hebron proposals could not develop into boundary objects because no transnational communicative space was permitted for this to occur. In this chapter, I develop the alternative concept of the ‘consensus object’. Consensus objects do constitute spaces of communication, but, as is indicated by the name, their *raison d'être* is consensus, or at least a demonstrated semblance thereof. Crucially, within consensus objects, the categories of people who interact and the basis and content of their interactions are closely regulated, both legally through visa restrictions (see Schweitzer and Neureiter, 2008), and culturally, through the denial or avoidance of negative sanctions. For these reasons, consensus objects cannot function as boundary objects, in which meaningfully diverse ‘definitions of the situation’ are accommodated in the interests of achieving productive change, although their advocates may claim that they do. Accordingly, I define a consensus object as ‘a pseudo boundary object’; a top-down, structured vehicle for public involvement and reassurance at a local scale, which mimics a boundary object by creating a misleading impression that communication across meaningful difference is being achieved in the interests of positive social change’.

As with the other examples in this study, in categorising consensus objects as pseudo boundary objects, I do not mean to suggest that the people and organisations involved in consensus objects are not well intentioned, or that they do not achieve some productive outcomes. Rather, I argue that, almost to the extent of risk objects, consensus objects are deficient in their capacity for peace building under conditions of serious ongoing geopolitical conflict. In order to illustrate the concept of the consensus object, I examine the discursive representation of state-initiated ‘sister city’ type relationships between US cities and their putative ‘counterparts’ in Iraq during the conservative administration of U.S. President George W. Bush.

Once classified as a ‘no-no’ area for sister city relationships (Zelinsky, 1990), Iraqi cities became the focus of intense preoccupation on the part of the Bush administration in the years following the ‘9/11 attacks’ on US soil. Amid the onslaught of security fears and ‘war on terror’ propaganda that ensued, anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States was high (Cainkar, 2002). In his now infamous “State of the Union’ address, Bush made specific reference to Iraq as a site of danger that needed to be contained by a strong and righteous America, and called upon US citizens to exercise vigilance on their home territories.

Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning ... Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade ... States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger ... America will do what is

necessary to ensure our nation's security... We are protected from attack only by vigorous action abroad, and increased vigilance at home (Bush, 2002).

Bush's reference to 'ticking time bombs, spread throughout the world' emphasised to his American audience the threat to public order posed by terrorism (see Weigert, 2003) and the need for caution when dealing with unknown others - by implication, Muslim - who originate from dangerous places. Not long after the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, however, these images of the threatening Muslim 'other' needed to be reversed as a matter of urgency, in order to confer moral legitimacy on what had come widely to be seen as a catastrophic error of judgment in US foreign policy. Like the Japanese, who had been collectively demonised during the Second World War, the Iraqi people needed to be re-humanised in the American imaginary to correspond with a changed political climate. As part of a rapid national revival of public diplomacy - "this time on steroids" (Freeman, 2006) - the U.S. government was seeking to transform fearful and suspicious US cities into uncritically welcoming domestic spaces, at least in the eyes of select Muslim visitors and sceptical international 'others' who might be open to conversion to the "American way". The operative word in this strategic agenda was 'visitors'. Unlike Simmel's unsettling stranger who 'comes today and stays tomorrow' (Bauman, 2001c), non-American Muslims especially targeted in this scenario would return reassuringly to their own places, there to disseminate happy memories and good will towards their erstwhile American hosts. The reality of US acceptance of Iraqi refugees, for example, was quite different, with the US accepting only 400, compared with over two million absorbed by nations bordering on Iraq (Kretsedemas and Brotherton, 2008:20).

For the architects of US ‘soft power’ (Nye, 2004), a plausibility structure (Berger, 1967) needed to be mobilised at short notice to support such a rapid and unlikely ideological transformation on the part of American cities, and, as Honorary President of Sister Cities International, President Bush found such a structure readily at hand. The date on which the precursor of SCI, the People to People program, had been launched - September 11th, 1956 – corresponded, by coincidence, to the date of the terrorist attacks that had spawned the U.S.-led ‘war on terror’. This historical accident facilitated a seemingly ‘natural’ conceptual transfer, via sister city discourses, of the moral legitimacy and charisma historically conferred upon Eisenhower (see Davies, 1954) onto the internationally discredited policies of a decidedly uncharismatic serving President. American civilisation and compassion could thence be publicly enacted as the peaceful and virtuous ‘other’ to the unbridled aggression of the uncivilised terrorist. In a ceremony simultaneously marking both occasions in the city of Austin on September 11, 2006, for example, solemn memorial was combined with a performance of the sister city song *We are one* (see chapter two of this study) and a sing-along of the Beatles song *All you need is love* (City of Austin website, 2006).

Situating the consensus object

In contrast to risk objects, which result from ambiguity and disjuncture within the ‘structure’ component of the sister cities model, consensus objects are generated by ambiguity and disjuncture within the ‘concept’ component of the model. The concept component, as will be recalled from chapter two, comprises a conceptual blend of universal and particular metaphors, respectively the ‘human family’ and the ‘citizen diplomat’. The ‘human

family' is an institutional and affective categorisation, denoting a networked human connectivity resembling an extended family on a global scale. It is also a moral categorisation, in which normative role obligations pertaining to the private sphere, especially those governing reciprocity and nurturance, are mapped onto international relations between cities. The 'citizen diplomat', by contrast, is a state-centric (Kavaloski, 1990) expression of civic obligation, which effects a metaphorical status upgrade of ordinary citizens, who lack the power, authority or resources of real diplomats, to endorsed emissaries of national governments. For Americans living under the Bush regime, the originally 'achieved' or elective status of 'citizen diplomat' was becoming increasingly 'ascribed', or allocated by others, as the occupation in Iraq dragged on, serving as a strategy of stigma management for national identity. As Sherri Mueller, a prolific public speaker as President of the National Council for International Visitors informed her fellow Americans in 2004, "you may not refer to yourselves as citizen diplomats, but that's exactly what you are". Four years later, taking advantage of a wider audience to be accessed via the electronic social networking site Facebook, Mueller posted an article she had written earlier for the Stanley Foundation, in which she addressed a rhetorical question as to what could be done to improve America's international standing.

One essential response is that you - the individual citizen - can take steps to ameliorate the situation. Citizen diplomacy is the concept that, in a vibrant democracy, the individual has the responsibility to help shape foreign relations "one handshake at a time." Participants in international exchange programs, whether guests or hosts, are often referred to as citizen diplomats or citizen ambassadors. However, it is critical that all of our citizens understand that they, too, are citizen diplomats. As you go about your daily lives you can

make a difference in how America is perceived and portrayed abroad. You can help shatter negative stereotypes. Whether you are a student in a college class sitting next to a foreign scholar, an athlete welcoming a teammate from overseas, a church member helping to resettle an immigrant family, a rock star, or a business representative negotiating a deal abroad, you have an opportunity—an obligation—to put Uncle Sam's best foot forward (Mueller, 2008).

Once accepted and embraced, volunteers' identification with the citizen diplomat role can be reinforced and affirmed through participation in public ceremonies and rituals and via material signifiers of commitment. These include campaign-style buttons emblazoned with the Stars and Stripes emblem, reading 'I'm a citizen diplomat. Are you?' (see Tulsa Global Alliance, n/d) and public declarations through Sister Cities International's 'Raise my Voice' pledge campaign, in which volunteers can sign a pledge card committing themselves "to fostering a world of mutual respect, understanding and cooperation". Once 'pledged', citizen diplomats are given a blue and white ribbon to wear as a sign of their commitment" (Sister Cities International, 2005).

Under normal conditions, allegiance to the nation state complements rather than precludes allegiance to the human family; personified states are commonly understood metaphorically as masculine patriarchs (Lakoff, 2002, 2005), each attending primarily to his responsibilities to his own nuclear unit, while supporting and being supported by less proximate extended kin. Blended imageries of family, nation and the world were introduced into the American collective consciousness during the 1950s, when the metaphor of the global family was strategically mobilised by the Eisenhower administration in support of its Cold War foreign policy. Klein (2003) demonstrates how Eisenhower

drew upon a 'familial language of political obligation' expressed through the metaphor of the 'multiracial, international family' to support his party's ideology of international interdependence. This abstract concept was given tangible form by a highly influential travelling photographic exhibition bearing the title 'The Family of Man'. Launched during the same period as the People to People program, the exhibition of 503 images from various countries was constructed around a theme of humanistic universalism, emphasising the deep commonalities claimed to underlie 'superficial' differences between cultures. It was seen by over nine million people around the world, both in allied countries and in those the US hoped to win over as allies (2003:187-188). Klein (2003) explains how the exhibition combined the seemingly incompatible conceptual systems of kinship and international relations by creating a common 'structure of feeling' which helped to establish American legitimacy as a comfortable concept within the 'common sense' knowledge of domestic lifeworlds.

In publicizing the idea that all humanity belonged to the same family, the show reinforced the terms through which the U.S. explained and justified its reshaping of the international order. America's claims of global "responsibilities," "obligations," and "commitments" became more acceptable when they were embedded in a logic of family. Imagined as an extension of family love, the extension of American power became somewhat less objectionable. The bonds of family rendered the inequalities of political and economic power less visible and partially defused the charges of racism and imperialism (2003:188).

The Family of Man exhibition calls to mind Fish's (1997) critique of what he terms 'boutique multiculturalism', an intercultural orientation through which the legitimacy of alternative cultural perspectives is celebrated by eating, singing and other aesthetic practices, but evaporates when representatives of

those cultures exhibit beliefs and practices that to them are neither superficial nor negotiable, and are antithetical to those of the boutique multiculturalist. As Fish (1997) explains,

a boutique multiculturalist does not and cannot take seriously the core values of the cultures he tolerates. The reason he cannot is that he does not see those values as truly "core" but as overlays on a substratum of essential humanity. That is the true core, and the differences that mark us externally - differences in language, clothing, religious practices, race, gender, class, and so on - are for the boutique multiculturalist no more than what Milton calls in his *Areopagitica* "moderat varieties and brotherly dissimilitudes that are not vastly disproportionall." We may dress differently, speak differently, woo differently, worship or not worship differently, but underneath (or so the argument goes) there is something we all share (or that shares us) and that something constitutes the core of our identities (1997:379).

Boutique multiculturalism thrives in an environment of consensus, and the success of Eisenhower's strategy to represent all people as united by their fundamental likeness under a benevolent US leadership was due in part to the ideological climate of the time. As a victor in a 'just' war, the US enjoyed high international standing and credibility as the world looked towards a more promising future, but nearly fifty years later, America's position in the global moral order was much less secure. In the same way that extended kinship relationships in real human families can break down when the behaviour of one member is perceived by the others to be morally culpable, states acting aggressively in their own interests to the detriment of others, and, by association, their citizens, can be negatively sanctioned, even to the extent of normative ejection from the conceptual category of humanity. Such a message was conveyed to the states of North Korea, Iran and Iraq by President Bush,

when, as noted above, he had collectively and publicly categorised them as an ‘axis of evil’.

Not long into the second year of the US occupation of Iraq, however, the boot of culpability was beginning to shift to the other foot. American standing in the world had undergone a deep and rapid deterioration (Singler, 2008) and American political elites had begun to realise, with considerable incredulity, that their vision of themselves as global peacemakers and saviours was not widely shared by the rest of the world. The Bush administration was faced with a dilemma as to how to ensure the security of the United States while regaining and recruiting the support and approval of its critics, both at home and abroad. In line with the U.S. Conservatives’ tradition of publicly framing their foreign policy in terms of values rather than issues (Lakoff, 2002), and more deeply, as I will argue, as an expression of ‘bypassed’ (Lewis, 1971) ‘political shame’ (Alweiss, 2003, Murphy, 2004), discourses emanating from the Bush administration and its supporters identified the cause of the problem as a failure of the international community to understand the true nature of the moral American. Greater exposure to real Americans going about their daily business in the domestic sphere, they reasoned, would correct this misunderstanding and lead to enhanced security and prosperity for the American people. A report from the 2004 conference of the US Coalition for Citizen Diplomacy, for example, noted that

lack of first-hand knowledge of the United States facilitates vicious stereotyping that diminishes foreign regard for our country and fuels terrorism. A strong web of person to-person contacts supports U.S. national security by undercutting these stereotypes. Even a person who strongly opposes our policies will have a hard time hating the United States if he or she

has had dinner in an American home, worked cooperatively with American counterparts, learned English from an American teacher, or attended an American school (McCarry, 2004).

Two years later, however, international goodwill towards the United States had plummeted still further. Debusmann (2006:5) reported at the time that “(d)istaste for America ... runs so deep that, at the recent World Cup in Germany the American team was the only one asked not to display its national flag on the team bus. In South Korea, traditionally a U.S. ally, two-thirds of people under 30 said in a recent poll that if there were a war between North Korea and the United States, they would side with North Korea”. In the same year, Melnyk (2006) conveyed the distress felt by *Business for Diplomatic Action* chairman Keith Reinhard over the ‘spoiled identity’ (Goffman, 1963) of his country and its people: “It is now politically correct in most regions of the world to dump on America”, reported Reinhard. “In Australia now if you want to say something is really stupid, or really bad, or really evil, you say: Oh, it’s so American”. Seemingly oblivious, however, to the increasing intensity of such signals, the Bush government’s framing of the cause of the apparent disjuncture between its high positive self image and its low standing in global public opinion remained constant. Speaking at the 2006 Community Citizen Diplomacy Summit in Missouri, US ambassador Kenton Keith, later to be curiously described by Schneider (2009: 51) as “a lightly complected African American with a trim build, dapper attire and diplomat’s mustache”, lamented the alarming distance between the rightful and actual positioning in international discourse of the misunderstood American.

We Americans see ourselves as a force for good in the world. Opinion polls show that our self image is largely positive. We have sacrificed our soldiers and our treasure to defeat tyranny, eradicate poverty, promote just solutions to conflicts around the world, fight the spread of nuclear weapons, and keep the peace. We have protected the weak against the strong, we have opened our markets to the exports of poor nations, and we have sent volunteers – young and old – around the world to give a helping hand where it is wanted. Most of us believe these things sincerely, and we want them to be true. But how do others see us? They largely see us as selfish, inefficient, hypocritical, and callous (Keith, 2006).

An essentialist representation of the misunderstood ‘good American’, with a belief in fairness “written into the American DNA” (Keith, 2006, quoted in Schneider, 2009:51) is the master frame organising post 9/11 discourses of citizen diplomacy. Once conceptualised in these terms, the obvious and rational course of action for citizen diplomats became one of revealing this essential truth to unbelievers, whose perceptions had been clouded because of misleading or misunderstood communication. In extreme mode, this assumption is neatly satirised in a cartoon by Alex Gregory, published in the *New Yorker* on February 2nd, 2002. A group of scantily clad and obviously affluent Americans is shown drinking martinis, smoking cigarettes and sunbathing, apparently at a seaside resort. The caption reads ‘I think that if these Islamic Fundamentalists got to know us they’d like us’.

The key to the widespread and uncritical popular acceptance of the ‘misunderstood American’ frame is to be found, I contend, in Keith’s (2006) qualifying phrase “we want them to be true”. The repetitive, seemingly obsessive nature of appeals to an essential moral goodness collectively distinguishing Americans from other publics, together with a refusal to

acknowledge the legitimacy of other interpretations of their behaviour, marks them as manifestations of an identity management strategy identified by Lewis (1971) as 'bypassed shame'. Recognition of a devalued self in the eyes of salient others produces painful feelings of rejection, which are most productively addressed by attempts to repair patently damaged or broken social bonds. However, in Western societies, in which the autonomous individual is valorised, shame has itself become shameful, and is consequently typically disguised, denied or ignored – in Lewis' (1971) terminology, 'unacknowledged' - in social interactions. Lewis (1971, cited in Scheff, 1990) identified two categories of unacknowledged shame: *overt*, undifferentiated shame and *bypassed* shame. "The former involves emotional pain which is misnamed (I feel uncomfortable); the latter, successful distraction from the pain through hyperactive thought, speech or behaviour" (Scheff, 1990:201). As noted by Giddens (1991), "bypassed shame links directly to feelings of ontological insecurity: it consists of repressed fears that the narrative of self-identity cannot withstand engulfing pressures on its coherence or social acceptability" (1991:65). Rather than adapting a flawed identity narrative to incorporate disconfirming evidence from others, the original narrative is repeated with ever-increasing intensity, effectively blocking processes of critical introspection necessary for reintegration into the wider collectivity.

In a demonstration of what, by Lewis' criteria, would suggest a condition of bypassed shame, Keith (2006), as others had done before him, went on to exhort his American audience to engage more often, and with greater familiarity, with their international brothers and sisters. More intimate experiences of American life would, he reasoned, correct unjust and unfounded

perceptions and build a more appealing image of America as the only remaining superpower in the post Cold War world.

America's place in the world can be enhanced by more exchanges. If people knew us better, they would be less likely to oppose us, they would be more likely to join with us in a war against international terrorism; they would more likely to send their sons and daughters to study among us, and more likely to welcome our own sons and daughters; and they would be more likely to buy our products. Of course there is another side to the coin: if Americans knew the rest of the world better we would wear the mantle of our unipolar superpower status with more dignity and empathy (Keith, 2006).

As noted above, such people to people exchanges were already in place at the time of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, in the form of hundreds of sister city relationships between US cities and international cities. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, SCI had identified deeper understanding between the U.S and the Muslim world as new priority for the organisation. Furthermore, in the perception of the President of the Board of Directors at Sister Cities International, Sherman Banks, the intrinsically moral organisation he represented was ideally positioned to answer the national call. "As a citizen diplomacy organization", he announced in a 2005 SCI newsletter,

we are naturally an organization made up of givers, working as instruments of justice and truth. We find great satisfaction when the hungry are fed, when the immobile are mobile, when the deprived are provided for, when the fearful are made fearless, and when the self-righteous are made humble. We do more than talk about the role of Citizen Diplomacy in the world—we walk through the world as diplomats in action. We possess the ability to open doors to the future and bring down any bigotry and hatred (Banks, 2005).

Back in 2002, however, there had still been work to be done in order to bring the notion of citizen diplomacy more closely into line with the national agenda in the minds of ordinary Americans. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, hundreds of messages of sympathy, many in spontaneous, imperfect English, had poured into American cities from sister cities around the world (Sister Cities International, n/d). Some had sent photographs of floral tributes placed outside the US embassies in their own countries, while others had simply underscored the seemingly secure status of Americans as morally blameless victims of atrocity. As understood by at least one commentator at the time, this overwhelmingly sympathetic response was evidence that the sister city movement had achieved “exactly what it was designed to do - make folks who live a world apart feel like family” (Hedelt, 2002).

For a short period thereafter, the human family and citizen diplomat metaphors had remained in alignment: US citizen diplomats, in supporting their own government, had been understood to be making their own contribution to building a safer and more peaceful world for all, free of the evil threat posed by terrorists, who, by dint of their barbaric actions, had confirmed their own unworthiness to be classified as part of humanity. After the invasion of Iraq, however, on the spurious pretext of uncovering and neutralising weapons of mass destruction, the legitimacy of the metaphorical blend was called into question by protests within America and around the world, and, by implication, the legitimacy of America’s place in the human family. As an internationally renowned and prestigious network credited with helping to bring an end to the Cold War (Richmond, 2003), the sister cities movement provided a crucial ideological resource for enabling the US government – and,

by extension, its supporters – to repair this dissonance, whilst warding off challenges to a policy it had no intention of changing.

Constructing the consensus object

Interviewed in April, 2002, Tim Honey (then Executive Director of Sister Cities International), while noting that sister city relations could only proceed with cities in countries with which the U.S. had diplomatic relations, stressed the need for his organisation to remain apolitical “in order to maintain its credibility and retain its international stance”. “We are not a political organization”, he asserted, “We’re not involved in advocacy. We are truly grassroots in our communities, and that is the common thread that binds us all together”. No sister city connection yet existed in countries such as Iraq, he explained, because there was no current U.S. recognition for the current regime; “We use a safety lens. Is it safe to go?” Despite such reservations, Honey expressed his hope that, in the future, cities in Afghanistan, Iraq and North Korea would become part of the Sister Cities phenomenon, “possibly in time for the organization’s 50th anniversary in 2006”. As it happened, he did not need to wait quite so long to see the establishment of U.S.-Iraqi ‘sister city’ relationships.

On June 9th, 2004, Laura Bush, then the First Lady of the United States, introduced an unexpected element into her remarks following the Spouses Roundtable at the G8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia. After responding to a question about the death of former US President Ronald Reagan, she turned to the reporter who had asked the question, adding

I thought maybe you were going to ask about - since you're from Dallas - about the Sister City project that we are announcing today. Dallas is going to

be a sister city with Kirkuk in Iraq, and they've already agreed to that. Tucson and Sulaymaniyah are going to be sister cities and Denver and Baghdad are going to be sister cities ...The sister city program, that is a way for two cities to work together for economic development, for friendship, to have pen pals with each other, to try to have mutual understanding. So I'm really proud today to announce that these three American cities have joined with three cities in Iraq to be sister cities (U.S. Office of the First Lady, 2004).

This announcement, which was as much of a surprise to the Denver city council as it was to the assembled reporters, signalled the introduction of a new paradigm in sister city relationships, the *overtly* state initiated, putatively culture-focused, strategic sister city partnership. Both legally and ideologically, its development had been enabled by the 'Freedom Promotion Act', which was introduced in 2002 for the purposes of using "international exchanges, sister cities programs, English-language training, international broadcasting, and so forth, to make U.S. values a reality for others" (Snow, 2004: 20). The US government had been directly involved in setting up strategic sister city relationships in the past, for example, non-proliferation programs aimed at preventing entrepreneurship on the parts of disgruntled nuclear scientists in the former Soviet Union (Weiner, 2002), and was continuing to regulate heavily the operations of grass roots sister city projects between American and Cuban cities (Parrish, 2002). However this was the first instance of a nationally announced application of the sister cities model, which, despite a White House statement applauding the cities concerned on their 'initiative' (Office of the First Lady, 2004), appears to have been the result of decisions made at the level of the U.S. state. In a rare instance of serious and insightful press commentary on the issue, the *Denver Post* (2004) reported that "(a)t best, the White House mischaracterised the partnership and jumped the gun in announcing it. At

worst, it's another example –albeit a small and insignificant one – of the troubling way post-war Iraq is being handled ... Sister city compacts can be beneficial if both cities have common goals or challenges. The compacts typically take months – if not years – to forge. The goal is to connect citizens. The compacts can't really be thrust upon cities". Regrettably, no further mention is made in the editorial of the implications of the incident for the management of 'post-war Iraq'.

Caught off guard by the White House announcement, officials representing Sister Cities International and the Denver City Council hastened to coordinate a response. The office of the Denver mayor requested clarification of the program and the role that the city would play, while expressing concerns that it might become a target for terrorists by virtue of its association with Baghdad (Fong, 2004). Spokespeople for the Denver city council were quoted in the press as saying that the city had as yet received no proposal from the national government and had not made any formal applications for such a program, but had verbally expressed interest in participating in US-Iraqi partnerships at a regional level. They were surprised, however, "that people thought it was a done deal," (Banda, 2004). By the following day, the situation had been normalised; the First Lady had been mistaken, it was reported (Fong, 2004). These were not to be sister city relationships, but part of a new program designed to promote friendship and understanding between the West and the Islamic world, to be known as 'Partners for Peace'.

Sister cities International issued a press release, which included a statement regarding the Denver Regional Council of Governments'

commitment to “improve cross cultural understanding and further the cause and development of peace”, together with an outline of the scope of the program by Tim Honey. The project was to be administered by Sister Cities International, with initial funding from the federal government, and would concentrate initially on humanitarian projects such as *Wheelchairs for Peace* and *Operation Iraqi Children*. SCI was accepting letters of interest from U.S communities so that partners could be found for three additional Iraqi cities (SCI, 2004). The SCI website subsequently explained the difference between ‘sister cities’ and ‘international partners’ as being one of duration and development, announcing that ‘International Partners’ programs were

not like traditional "sister city" relationships. Because it can take a year or more to establish a formalized sister city arrangement, Sister Cities International utilized its partnership category for this program. The "partnership" designation is especially helpful in situations where communities may want to conduct a short-term project without formalizing sister city ties. Organizers hope that ultimately sister city relationships will grow out of the program (SCI, 2005).

Although the *Partners for Peace* program officially concluded in 2006, the U.S-Iraqi ‘partnerships’ announced by the White House were still shown as ‘current’ on SCI’s list of *U.S. - Iraq Sister Cities* as of November, 2009. I therefore situate them in the category of ‘sister city relationships’ in my discussion, in line with the categorisation adopted by Zelinsky (1991).

U.S-Iraqi sister city activities

Almost completely absent from discourses generated by and about U.S. Iraqi sister city type ‘partnerships’ are acknowledgments that the United states had

so recently bombed and invaded, and continued to occupy against vehement resistance, the homeland of its Middle Eastern municipal partners. No hint of culpability or responsibility for the devastation wrought by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq taints these stories of municipal sisterhood. Instead, in joyful scenes conveyed by the print and electronic media, we read, see and hear of impressed Iraqi mayors and students eager to learn about democratic government and the American way of life, American troops handing out soft toys and school supplies to Iraqi children, and other heart-warming humanitarian projects undertaken by more fortunate members of the human family for the benefit of their afflicted kin. The direct cause of much of that affliction is either attributed to the corrupt regime of Saddam Hussein, from which U.S. led forces had liberated a discursively homogenised Iraqi population, or is concealed altogether through the convenient grammatical device of the passive voice. Alternative 'definitions of the situation', such as the chaos caused by the invaders' destruction of Iraq's civic infrastructure, or U.S. economic and political, rather than humanitarian, motives for the invasion - for example, the desire on the part of the U.S. to secure the country's oil reserves and affirm its own global hegemony (Žižek, 2005:4) - are effectively excluded from collective consideration. Sister city relationships which, in practice, provide domestic ideological and material support for the U.S. occupation of Iraq, are successfully framed in public discourses as essentially cultural and moral, and 'therefore' apolitical.

This extraordinary feat of alternative reality construction is achieved primarily, I argue, through the narrative device of framing U.S.-Iraqi partnerships with reference to the unthreatening social categories of disability

and childhood. I illustrate this process using the examples of *Wheelchairs for Peace*, *Operation Iraqi Children*, *Shoes for Orphan Souls* and student exchange programs.

The *Wheelchairs for Peace* project was founded in 2002, and is operated jointly by *Sister Cities International* and the *Wheelchair Foundation*. It has since become a core humanitarian assistance program for Sister Cities International (SCI, 2006). As indicated by the organisation's name, the targets of their humanitarian efforts are disabled people of all ages living in parts of the world that require peace building interventions. Tempe was the fifth and smallest American city chosen to participate in the *Partners for Peace* program, and was 'on the road to becoming sister cities' with the Iraqi town of Hilla when its manager, Mike Conner, was interviewed by Gutel (2005). Conner framed the *Partners for Peace* project as taking the sister cities concept of fostering friendship and business ties "one step further", as he explained the benefits of the program in terms that would be familiar to Lofland's (1993) consensus movement actors of the 1980s: "When you meet someone and you become their friend", he advised, "the chance for conflict is greatly reduced; you're not gonna bomb your friend. And that's what's important about partnership for peace". Gutel (2005) goes on to note that "(o)fficials with Sister Cities International say Iraqis in Hilla are also enthused about the partnership. Hilla officials couldn't be reached for their comments. But a delegation is coming to the United States in the next 6 months to work out details of the developing program".

A month after the publication of Gutel's interview, which was available in both print and audio versions, author Gail Fisher of the Wheelchair

Foundation posted a story identifying the relationship between Tempe and Hilla as one of sister cities, but in an alternative form. In a pattern reminiscent of Eliasoph's (1999) avowedly 'apolitical' environmental activists, whose activities were decidedly political by objective standards, Fisher takes tentative steps towards an oppositional stance to the U.S occupation, only to retreat almost immediately into a position of polite bewilderment and grief. "The war in Iraq seems so remote from the comfortable lives we lead in the East Valley", she begins. "It's not like World War 11 where citizens felt a real engagement with the war. This is a questionable, dubious war whose conflict is beyond understanding. We mourn the tragic loss of lives in this struggle." She then goes on to offer a ray of hope for others who, like herself, might be seeking a degree of agency to address a catastrophic political situation with which they feel very little connection. However, typically for sister cities discourses, confrontation with the elected national government over its foreign policies is not on the agenda, nor any allocation of direct or indirect responsibility for the 'brutal killings', 'maiming, and 'other atrocities'. Rather, she notes that

(f)or most of us, our only connection to this war is through the news media. There are daily stories of tragic car bombings and other violent atrocities. Beside the brutal killings, there's another aspect of this war not always portrayed by the media: The suffering of the downtrodden and weaker members of a war-torn society. The already physically disabled and ill endure even more. Thousands of Iraqi people have been maimed and are physically disabled from this conflict. While most of us feel powerless to make a difference in the lives of these people, Tempe Sister Cities recently announced that they will send wheelchairs to victims of wartime violence in the city of Hilla. They are participating in the Partners for Peace project with Iraq through Sister Cities International. ... As you see, there is a way for East Valley residents who want to make a positive difference in this war, after all.

Disabled Iraqis, many of whom may owe their condition to the invasion's legacy of conflict and violence, are thus constituted as needy and unthreatening recipients of American largesse, whose desperate plight offers a way for U.S. citizens to enact an unproblematically positive aspect of their country's foreign policy, while seemingly remaining disengaged from political debate. More extensive and direct in their representation in U.S.-Iraqi sister city narratives, however, as apolitical actors *par excellence*, are children, both Iraqi and American.

The innocent child

As quintessential signifiers of innocence (Warner, 1995, Rubinstein, 2000) and strategic symbolic substitutes for "complex, speaking persons" (Barker-Plummer & Boaz, 2005, cited in Schwalbe, 2008:6), children feature heavily in U.S.-Iraqi 'sister cities' discourses, principally through the projects 'Operation Iraqi children', 'Shoes for Orphan Souls' and the 'Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange program'. As noted by Giroux (2000) as "an ethical referent, innocence humanizes children and makes a claim on adults to provide security and protection" (2000:61). Standing metonymically for the Iraqi people as a whole, Iraqi children are represented in sister city discourses as expressing uncritical and unqualified appreciation of the U.S. military personnel in their midst and gratitude towards their generous American benefactors. Moral legitimacy is thus bestowed upon the U.S. presence in, and transformation of, their politically, economically and socially fractured homeland.

A humanitarian project of Sister Cities International (SCI, 2007), *Operation Iraqi Children* (OIC) was formed in March, 2004 by actor Gary

Sinise and author Laura Hillenbrand. The program provided a structured medium through which Americans could send school supplies overseas to Iraqi children, to be distributed in person by American troops, and, by June, 2005, it had delivered 125,000 kits of supplies (Blankenship, 2005). The organisation later partnered with *People to People International* and changed its name to *Operation International Children*, to signify the extension of its services to children in other nations with an American military presence (OIC web page, n/d). In keeping with its stated aim of providing support for U.S. troops, discourses emanating from *Operation Iraqi Children* adopt a uniformly positive stance on the American presence in Iraq. The following excerpts from the OIC website, for example, mobilise an “American rescuers’ frame, explicitly situated within the wider justificatory ‘freedom frame’ employed on a regular basis by the Bush administration, thereby affirming the credibility of official government discourses.

During and after Operation Iraqi Freedom, American soldiers passing through Iraqi villages were horrified at the squalor of Iraqi schools, which had been severely neglected under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.... The future of the Iraqi nation is being squandered for lack of basic school supplies. Moved by the plight of these children, many American soldiers have taken it upon themselves to help. Working in small groups on their days off, soldiers gather supplies sent by family members, friends, and various groups and take them to villages, sometimes coming under fire as they work to reconstruct the schools and deliver learning tools to Iraqi kids. Their efforts have met with immense gratitude from local Iraqis and their children, who now have access to the basic tools of education for the first time in their lives. "I have seen Iraqi kids climbing on our soldiers and hugging them and kissing them," remembers Sinise, who accompanied Army soldiers to a dilapidated school they were rebuilding. "I have seen their smiling faces and their attempts to say 'I love

you' in broken English. The folks I saw had hope in their eyes and gratitude in their hearts for what was done for them."

Citing its founders' connection to Mary Jean Eisenhower, who, in addition to being the granddaughter of the 1950s President, is President of *People to People International* and the 2006 recipient of the Sister Cities International "Eisenhower Legacy Award for Global Citizenship", the website goes on to align OIC's humanitarian efforts ideologically with the U.S. 'soft power' (Nye, 2004) campaign for the 'hearts and minds' of erstwhile and current adversaries. The gifts and supplies distributed by American troops to Iraqi children can be seen to perform a double ideological function for the U.S state in terms of their temporal orientation. In present time, they create affective bridges between the U.S military and private Iraqi lifeworlds by addressing the needs and hopes of emotionally appealing child intermediaries, while at the same time serving as a means for shaping uncertain future political relations between the two countries in accordance with U.S interests.

Sinise, Hillenbrand and Eisenhower believe that the benefits of this program will reach far beyond the recipients of the supplies. By bringing Americans together with citizens of war-torn nations and demonstrating American devotion to these people's welfare, the program can foster understanding between our nations and generate goodwill between local citizens and American soldiers. "Every time a box of school supplies is delivered by our troops it will be another small victory for them in helping win hearts and minds," says Sinise. "It is a beautiful way to begin a relationship with the future leaders of Iraq, Afghanistan and other war-torn nations (OIC website, n/d).

Unlike Lofland's (1993) consensus movement actors, who travelled to politically problematic countries in the 1980s in order to interact directly with

foreign populations, most volunteers for *Operation Iraqi Children* do not personally visit the country targeted for their humanitarian efforts, and the organisation itself does not have a base in Iraq. Rather, the testimony of a young volunteer at the Sister Cities Youth Conference in 2008 suggests a unilateral American vision of ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2003), in which the imaginer will never know or meet most of his or her fellow members, but nevertheless holds a mental “image of their communion” (2003: 6). “(O)ur major community service project with Operation Iraqi Children and People to People was very heartwarming”, she reports. “Even though I got two major paper cuts from putting notebooks into plastic bags, I just knew that the children in Iraq would love their school supplies, and maybe it would help them get a better education. This made me feel really motivated to do more because I realized that even though I would probably never directly see those children in Iraq, it still made me happy to imagine their smiles” (Roeder, 2008).

The smiles of Iraqi children can be experienced more directly in internet videos, such that narrated by Joe Montagna, who presented OIC co-founder Gary Sinese with the ‘God of Fire Man of the Year’ award in 2007. To the tune of tinkling piano music, followed by Louis Armstrong’s rendition of the song *What a wonderful world*, Sinese is shown helping U.S troops to distribute gifts to delighted Iraqi children, while in one scene, an Iraqi child, held by a man who might be his father, kisses a U.S. soldier on the cheek (‘Prokkip’, 2007). In a web video from *Parents TV* (2008), billed as a ‘video resource for parenting’ for ‘It Moms’, participation in *Operation Iraqi Children* is revealed as a nationally focused vehicle for self-congratulation and

for enacting the American dream of individual advancement, rather than one of international political awareness raising. Presenters Marni Renison and Holly Resnick are filmed visiting a local American elementary school, where children are busily drawing posters to raise funds for an OIC project sponsored by *Campfire USA*, which, it is claimed by the area director, will give them an ‘authentic experience in leadership’. Asked “what excites you about doing Operation Iraqi Children?” a girl named Caitlin replies “I’ve seen a lot of pictures of children who don’t have school supplies and they’re kinda poor, so I wanted to get some stuff out to them so that they have good lives, just like us”. Turning to the camera, Renison responds “Good job, Caitlin’s parents!” Mentally conjuring an image of an Iraqi child beneficiary of the OIC project, an earnest looking boy whose name appears to be Tanner, then explains, “by giving him these school supplies, I can give him a chance to learn, just the same as anyone else in this school could”. Resnick responds by asking the child “Are you going to be President someday? Tanner for President!” “OK It Moms”, she concludes to camera, “our children truly are tomorrow’s leaders and Campfire USA helps empower them and develop them into those leaders” (*Parents TV*, 2008).

The *Shoes for Orphan Souls* project is listed on the SCI website as the major project undertaken in the Dallas-Kirkuk Partners for Peace program. It is operated by *Buckner International*, a religious organisation described on its website as “a global Christian ministry that seeks justice for ‘the least of these’ by providing care and resources for orphans and at-risk children in the United States and more than 50 countries around the world. Through international orphanage support, humanitarian aid, short-term missions, foster care and

adoption, Buckner has made a lasting impact in some of the world's most poverty-stricken and socially desperate countries" (Buckner International, n/d). During the period covered by the Partners for Peace project, the city of Dallas donated 7,000 pairs of shoes and 10,000 pairs of socks for distribution to children in Kirkuk (SCI: 'U.S. - Iraq Sister Cities', n/d).

Via Buckner's partnership with Sister Cities International, Iraq's 'desperation' is ideologically constituted as social and humanitarian rather than political in nature. Dilday (2004), for example, relays the statement of Tiffany Taylor, marketing director for *Buckner Orphan Care International* (BOCI) and *Shoes for Orphan Souls*, that the situation of Iraqi children is "a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, and we want to do our part to render aid. Thousands of Iraqi children live like refugees in camps where food, water, clothing and proper sanitation are scarce. Buckner is humbled to be able to touch these children in a tangible way". Like *Operation Iraqi Children*, *Shoes for Orphan Souls* links the American and Iraqi domestic spheres by personalising and privatising the role of American troops stationed in Iraq, undergirded by a religious missionary agenda. Jeff Jones, the director of operations at BOCI, is quoted on the *Shoes for Orphan Soles* website as noting that the gift of shoes to Iraqi children "opens the door for us to minister to a lot of the children and orphans in Iraq. The sister city venue is a wonderful way for us to do that". For Jones, the presentation of the shoes demonstrates "our objective with the Shoes for Orphan Souls project – for us to be a help to orphans and children allows us to see our ministry vision validated" (BOCI, n/d).

In the following story posted by *Mission Network News* (2005), the concrete causes of the displacement of Iraqi child refugees 'since the fall of

Saddam Hussein' are glossed over, in favour of an emphasis on Iraqi gratitude for American good will and practical assistance.

In the days since the fall of Saddam Hussein, tens of thousands have been displaced in Kirkuk, Iraq. That translates to thousands of children living in refugee camp situations, without the basic necessities. When Buckner Orphan Care International's Tiffany Taylor met with Kirkuk's governor, she told him they were sending over ten thousand pairs of shoes for the orphans in the area. "He was just blown away when he saw the shoes about ready to leave, and could not believe that the people of America would care enough about his children to help him... Taylor says while the shoes will be distributed by the military, the team is working to share the hope of Christ. "This donation is really going to help us open the doors there for a partnership with orphanages in Iraq, for us being able to tell the children that they are so loved by their heavenly Father. That's a really exciting part of being able to send over so many shoes because it means more than ten thousand children hearing that they're loved." (Mission Network News, 2005)

Along with Shoes for Orphan Souls, the city of Dallas also initiated a sports program called 'Soccer for Life', in which a youth team from Kirkuk was selected to participate in the annual Dallas Cup Tournament. According to the SCI website, the game would provide "a needed outlet and distraction for young people currently living in a tumultuous reality" (SCI, n/d).

Joe Rice, a former mayor of Denver who had served in Iraq with the U.S. Army Reserve in 2004, is widely credited as the instigator of the Denver-Baghdad regional partnership. The title of a power point presentation given by Rice at the Sister Cities International conference in July 2005 - *Two regions, One Goal: Partners for Peace* - posits an exact correspondence between U.S and Iraqi interests and an implied correspondence between the regions themselves. Rice begins his optimistically toned presentation by explaining to

his American audience the reasons why they should care about the situation in Iraq. Explicitly bracketing “the righteousness of the war” as a “separate discussion”, Rice notes that “(w)hat’s happening is worth our understanding and our investment. Stability is in our interests and that of the Iraq’s. [There are] (s)o many trying to do right thing for the right reasons”. “The bad *is* happening”, he acknowledges, “ (b)ut there’s also *more*...Life on the streets is surprisingly normal, [the] economy is good, Iraqis are developing important grass roots organizations and Iraqis are optimistic about their future (Rice, 2005, emphasis in original). Rice goes on to name the activities of the partnership as including email and phone friendships and advice and the shipping of school supplies through the Sister Cities program, illustrated on one slide by a photograph of a former Baghdad Governor surrounded by attentive children in the ‘Butterfly Pavilion’.

As with *Operation Iraqi Children* and *Shoes for Orphan Souls*, children feature significantly in the activities and discourses of the Denver-Baghdad partnership. For the project ‘Boxes for Baghdad’ for example, Denver sent over 2,500 school supply kits that had been donated directly to the organisation or collected by local Boy Scouts, while the ‘Bears for Baghdad’ project saw over 400 teddy bears and other stuffed animals sent to children in the Karada and Sadr City Districts of Baghdad (DRCOG, 2009). A story by independent journalist Tamie Ross (2004) for the United Methodist Church (of which Rice is member) shows a smiling Rice in his army uniform, holding a small, shy-looking Iraqi child. The accompanying text links the Iraqi child to Rice’s own children, and their innocent endorsement of his military role.

Now home in Littleton, Colo., with his wife, Kendall, and 3 ½-year-old twins, Harrison and Lexie, Rice talks by phone and e-mail with Iraqi council members several times a week ... Harrison and Lexie were toddlers when their father went off to war. They told anyone who would listen that their daddy was off helping to put a bad, bad man in time-out. When Rice came home, he brought a portrait of Saddam Hussein with him, “One of those portraits that was everywhere there ... we all got one.” Now his children shake their fingers at the imprisoned dictator’s image and tell their daddy he did a good job (Ross, 2004).

While small Iraqi children play an important role as *visible* objects of American altruistic love and care, the selected *voices* of older Iraqi children play a more tangible role in affirming the legitimacy of the Bush administration’s policies through sister city discourses. More articulate than their younger counterparts, Iraqi teenagers and their American hosts are reported in the following story as taking a Democrat politician to task over his opposition to the continued U.S. military presence in their country.

Gov. Bill Ritter got more than he bargained for when he entertained questions Wednesday from 30 Iraqi teenagers touring the United States. Speaking to the students, the Democratic governor explained that he believes the U.S. invasion of Iraq was preemptive and that America’s presence has “greatly jeopardized” security in the country. Do you know the real situation over there? the students asked. Saying unguarded cities and towns are far more dangerous than they’ve been described in the American media, the students peppered Ritter with questions about whether he would pull U.S. troops out if it meant more Iraqi civilians would get killed. “It’s a bad situation. It’s a very bad situation,” one boy told the governor. “We need someone to help us” (Sealover, 2007).

The article goes on to expand at length upon Iraqi and American teenagers’ interpretations of America’s foreign policy obligations – after bracketing the legitimacy of the original invasion in order to focus on current priorities –

including their dismissal of the Democrat governor's competence to comment on areas outside his jurisdiction.

After the meeting with Ritter at the state Capitol, several of the Iraqi teenagers said regardless of how they felt about the initial U.S. invasion, the troops are needed now ... One boy said the U.S. needs to concentrate on closing off Iraq's borders so that terrorists can't enter the country. Another boy said America must make the Iraqi government be more honest with the people and explain where the country's money and resources are going. "I don't think any of them want the troops to withdraw," said 14-year-old Rachel Sabey, whose family is one of several in the Denver area hosting the students while they are in Colorado learning about local government. Judging Ritter's answers, one girl said that foreign policy wasn't his job, and a boy added that Ritter, like most American leaders, only knows what he hears from major media sources. "They know the upper level of the situation. They don't know in deep," the boy said ... The trip to Colorado was organized through the Baghdad-Denver Region Partnership, a program of Sister Cities International, and funded largely by the U.S. State Department (Sealover, 2007).

While children are not the sole focus of U.S.-Iraqi sister city discourses, the prevalence of child-centred, largely care-themed stories in discursive representations of this manifestly macro-political exercise in international relations would appear to defy rational explanation. Also puzzling is the seemingly universal uncritical acceptance on the parts of U.S. urban populations of state-initiated sister city type relationships between U.S. and Iraqi cities as a credible and appropriate means of addressing the ongoing crisis in Iraq. When situated within their wider national political and cultural context, however, these phenomena can be recognised as conforming to a wider symbolic logic organised around a gendered division of labour between the

state and the city. Whereas the manifest function of U.S.-Iraqi sister city relationships is to enhance communication across difference in order to reinforce American legitimacy and security at the international scale, the latent function can be understood to be the management of a particular emotion – identified as political shame - in the interests of national identity construction. The work of the cognitive linguist George Lakoff enables the first step to be taken in understanding this conceptually complex process.

Family values and the metaphoric gendering of political space

As (Ringmar, 2008:57) observes, all political systems need to promote in their citizenries a level of hermeneutic stability sufficient to enable coherent interpretations of their social worlds, and the strategic selection of metaphor can play a prominent role in this process. However according to Lakoff (2002), the two principal political parties in U.S. politics - the conservative Republicans and the liberal Democrats - are unevenly matched in their cognizance of the power of metaphor in this regard, and in their skill in its manipulation. Conservatives, argues Lakoff (2002), have ‘left liberals in the dust’, employing a sophisticated rhetoric of family values to justify their policies with such success that they have attracted the votes of socioeconomically disadvantaged Americans, the very people most harmed by those policies.

Lakoff (2002) contends that all political thought is inherently moral, and that election results are the collective outcome of individual judgements as to what constitutes the good society. In line with a central tenet of cognitive linguistics theory, namely that humans understand new and complex

phenomena in terms of simpler and more familiar ones (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), he argues that Americans understand their complex national political sphere in terms of domestic kinship relations. This connection is unsurprising, he reminds us, since primary moral socialisation is produced by and within the family. Metaphoric reasoning subsequently allows personal moral meanings acquired through family socialisation to be transferred from the domestic sphere to the public sphere of the nation, which is also conceptualised as a kind of family (Lakoff, 2002:13). Whether progressive, conservative or moderate in orientation, all political decisions, argues Lakoff, rest on a cognitive foundation of normative belief systems regarding the proper nature of family relations, particularly with regard to parental authority.

Lakoff's (2002) theory of 'moral politics' can be summed up as follows. For political conservatives, the salient normative referent is that of the 'strict father'. A strict father figure is considered necessary for families and nations alike, since there is evil in the world from which he must protect his family, or, by metaphoric extension, the citizens he governs. A strict father is also needed to teach his children to distinguish right from wrong, and to shape their own behaviour accordingly. Wives have their place in this conceptual scheme, which, in accordance with patriarchal ideology, is to support their husbands by abiding by their decisions, and to care for their families. The strict father is a potent metaphor, combining authority, morality and power. Its consequences for political and economic policy include support for 'righteous' wars, a punitive criminal justice system and an ethic of individual responsibility. For political liberals, on the other hand, the guiding metaphor is the 'nurturant parent'. This is a gender-neutral metaphor, which prioritises

care, empathy and protection of less powerful or able family members. The nurturant parent model in turn supports negotiation, rehabilitation and the welfare state (Lakoff, 2002).

According to Lakoff (2002), the crucial point that U.S. conservatives understand and that liberals do not, is that Americans vote according to ephemeral value systems rather than concrete issues of policy, a situation which explains the continuing popularity and support of a President whose policies were detrimental to many of the citizens he was charged to govern. These people voted for Bush, Lakoff contends, because the family-based moral worldview he presented to them resonated with their own private worldviews. While metaphoric reasoning in itself has no moral loading, its manipulation through the use of 'Orwellian language' - saying the opposite of what is the case - in the promotion of harmful policies is reprehensible, because it undermines the democratic process by mystifying the true nature and causes of negative phenomena . Lakoff (2005) maintains that political parties use this strategy when they know themselves to be in a weak position; that is, when the majority of the public objects to their actual practices. He gives as an example the Bush administration's 'Clear Skies' initiative, which, in practice, weakens mercury pollution controls and poisons the skies over America.

Despite the growing unpopularity to the war in Iraq and its massive loss of moral ground on the world stage, not least as a result of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the Bush administration was returned to government in the elections of November, 2004. Clearly, according to Lakoff's formulation, Americans wanted to see a strong father figure in action, protecting their nation from further attacks at home through pre-emptive interventions abroad. However in

the view of Faludi (2007), what the Bush government was actually defending was not the nation itself, but a more abstract and even more compelling national resource - the cultural myth of American invincibility.

Reflecting on the response of the American government and media in the immediate aftermath of '9/11', Faludi (2007) noticed a marked discrepancy between U.S. reactions to terrorist attacks and those of other countries, notably Spain and the United Kingdom. While the national governments of European cities had framed the attacks as the work of politically motivated criminals who needed to be brought to justice through the criminal justice system, the conservative U.S. government and media had, improbably, framed the assaults on the symbols of U.S. political and economic power as attacks on its domestic homes and hearths. Such frames included a highly fanciful description of the twin towers by *New York Times Magazine* writer Virginia Heffernan as a long-married couple, in which, in the manner of human relationships, one partner had perished shortly after the demise of its companion (2007:116-117).

A broader response from the predominantly conservative U.S. press called for a revival of 'traditional' family values, whereby working women would return to the domestic space of the home to produce and care for children, while supporting the efforts of their re-masculinised men to defend their country through military and political action. Searching for an explanation for such improbable responses to what had been explicitly identified by their perpetrators as politically motivated attacks, Faludi came to a realisation that the national response had its roots in traumas experienced far back in American history during the period of white 'settlement' of Indian lands. In that period, as on September 11th, 2001, American men had been demonstrably unable to

protect their domestic spaces, and the white women they contained, from savage attacks by dark-skinned aggressors, giving rise to the national torment of in what she terms, drawing on a 1954 novel of the Wild West, 'the terror dream' (2007:208). Fleeing from unbearable shame resulting from such devastating public revelations of inadequacy, Americans of both eras, argues Faludi, sought refuge in a collective fantasy of masculine invincibility and feminine dependency. "If the myth's constructions ran afoul of the average American woman's reality", she writes, "well, defying reality was the point. What mattered was restoring the illusion of mythic America where women needed men's protection and men succeeded in providing it. What mattered was vanquishing the myth's dark twin, the humiliating "terror-dream" that 9/11 had forced to the surface of national consciousness" (2007:118).

Such was the prevailing ideological climate in the United States at the time of Laura Bush's announcement of the new 'sister city' partnerships between U.S and Iraqi cities. That such a novel development in U.S. foreign policy in the region was introduced to the American public by the President's wife, rather than the President himself, is in keeping with the gendered division of labour characteristic of the patriarchal family values demonstrated by Lakoff (2002) and Faludi (2007) to have been rating highly in the American consciousness during that period. The First Lady's appropriation of the metaphorically feminine 'sister cities' movement to further a political agenda set by her husband parallels a conceptual shift in the role of the urban-based American citizen diplomat. In their unqualified support of U.S-Iraqi 'sister city' relationships, the heirs of the citizen diplomats of the 1980s - who had harnessed the symbolic power of people to people connections as a means of

politely protesting their country's foreign policies (Lofland, 1993) - had ceased to protest at all, having transformed themselves in accordance with the prevailing national ideological agenda into diplomatic *wives*.

In an early "exploratory" analysis of the role of the diplomatic wife, Hochschild (1969) draws attention to the functions of the American ambassador's wife as an informal and indirect actor in the service of the U.S. state. As a wife, her interactions with representatives of other countries are mediated by her personal relationship to her husband. These can thus be understood as taking place within a liminal conceptual space, in which the boundaries between public and private are deliberately and permanently blurred, allowing covert messages to move easily across individual and national scales without any political responsibility being taken for those messages.

As an unofficial representative of American foreign policy and American people, the ambassador's wife has a full-time position made up of responsibilities, restrictions, and privileges which carry over from her husband's official position. In this "vicarious role" (a role by virtue of one's association with another person's role) she must not only meet, know, and entertain a large variety of politically relevant people, she must communicate political and social messages to them. Thus, hers is a particular kind of vicarious role. It involves being a symbol to others and dealing with the symbolic side of other people, for in diplomatic life, public behavior even in apparently private places is "diplomatically significant" and carries with it messages which have less to do with personal feelings than with the decisions of higher state department officials in Washington. Furthermore, the ambassador's wife, because she has no official rights and responsibilities, tends to specialize in the more purely symbolic aspects of diplomatic life and in the communication of political messages through nonofficial channels (Hochschild, 1969:73) .

Hochschild (1969) distinguishes between two kinds of 'message system' used by diplomatic wives in the furtherance of their husbands' careers. The 'political message system' indirectly reminds non-Americans of the position held by the U.S. government on specific issues, while the 'social message system' sends messages about status differences. The diplomatic wife is also a culturally astute and a skilled manager of political 'facework' (Goffman, 1955) within domestic spaces of hospitality, remaining impeccably polite and skilled at putting at their ease those guests politically courted by her husband, while shutting out others whose governments have fallen into disfavour. By way of illustration, Hochschild (1969) relates the following account of a putatively 'social' event given by an ambassador's wife: "The wife of the Mauritanian ambassador gave a tea last Thursday for the diplomatic corps wives", the wife recounted. "The Red Chinese came - as usual there were three of them - and shook hands with me and found the Yugoslav. The Pakistani kissed the Red Chinese on the cheek, while the Indonesian, formerly the Chinese' best friend, turned her back and sat down with the Swede and the South Vietnamese" (1969:73). Clearly, these encounters were not expressions of 'authentic' friendships arising from personal inclination, but metonymic relationships dictated by the foreign policies of the various governments indirectly represented by the assembled wives.

Like those of Hochschild's (1969) diplomatic wives, the 'friendships' between visiting Iraqis and their American hosts through sister city type projects do not derive from spontaneous affection, or even from the 'deep identification' attempted by sister city activists such as those operating in El Salvador in the 1980s (see Munkres, 2008). As noted by Scandlen (2004), for

example, agencies seeking to place Muslim students in American homes have to work hard to reassure potential host families that the students “take a written test, go through one or two interviews and undergo background screenings” before qualifying as guests of American families. Rather, such relationships are expressions of strategic necessity, requiring, as is suggested by the Pakistani wife’s kiss, at least a degree of what Hochschild (1979) was later to call ‘emotion work’, in the indirect service of the U.S. state. Furthermore, through the education campaigns of organisations such as *Business for Diplomatic Action* and the *Coalition for Citizen Diplomacy*, sister city volunteers, like budding diplomatic wives, are taught to refine their skills in cross-cultural etiquette and communication so as to convey a positive image of America to currently salient international others. Once established, these skills enable the transfer of covert messages as to the legitimacy of the U.S. occupation of Iraq and of broader American ideologies - messages which have been patently picked up by the youthful Iraqis in the examples given above.

Theoretical implications

In this chapter, I have intentionally adopted a more critical stance towards the subject material, in order to draw attention to (a) the dominance of a single, overarching ‘definition of the situation’ prevailing in U.S.-Iraqi sister city type discourses and (b) the discrepancy between that frame and those mobilised by opponents of U.S. policy and actions in Iraq. Both are crucial to what I argue is a breakdown of the sister model proposed in chapter two of this study, as the result of a vulnerability in the ‘concept’ component of the model. This vulnerability facilitates a propensity towards unacknowledged or ‘bypassed’ (Lewis, 1971) shame on the parts of sister city actors, for whom both national

identity (the ‘citizen diplomat’ role) and humanity as a whole (the ‘human family’ allegiance) constitute highly salient referents. When the national governments of such actors, or representatives of their nations, are publicly accused of wrongdoing, a disjuncture arises between these two aspects of the concept component. Becoming aware - however briefly and at whatever level of consciousness – of their collective responsibility, the actors themselves feel the pain of vicarious shame (see Johns, Schmader and Lickel, 2005). As noted by Wouters (1998:12), in a condition of shame, “one’s conscience is at least partly in agreement” with critical others. Political shame arises from identification with the discredited actions of one’s own government, which stands metonymically for the people who elected it to power. In its most extreme form, it can transcend the particular scale of the national to take universal form, such as the ‘species shame’ – felt “for belonging to a species capable of such crimes” - evoked by reflection on the holocaust (Alexander, 2007:167). In political contexts, as Alweiss (2003) explains,

the most important aspect of shame for our understanding of collective responsibility is that it can also express our political and moral expectations. When I say that it makes a difference whether a German or a non-German constructs a Holocaust memorial in Berlin in the name of humanity, I am saying that a German has to recognise the specificity of her responsibility. She has to acknowledge that the political world of which she is a part, is unjust. A German should thus feel a tension between her moral outlook – the aspirations she has for the world at large – and the socio-political situation in which she finds herself. I expect her to feel uncomfortable about her German identity, because it does not converge with the idea of a common humanity. Shame expresses exactly this tension ... The internalized other, whose judgment we respect at that instant, is not a particular person or institution but the ideal of a common humanity which provides the focus for our political and

moral expectations. When our expectations of the world and what the world expects of us no longer coincide, we feel shame (2003:315).

The widespread domestic support of U.S. Iraqi sister city relationships can be understood, I contend, as a collective manifestation of bypassed political shame. Dale (2005:1) reports that “Americans are highly vulnerable when it comes to public perceptions in other countries, partly because they like their foreign policy to have a moral dimension”. However, in American culture, perhaps even more than other Western societies, feelings of shame are themselves understood as shameful, and consequently avoided or denied, in an effort to maintain the coherence of desired self-evaluations (see Lickel, Schmader, Curtis, Scarnier and Ames, 2005). By acknowledging only morally and emotionally positive aspects of U.S. interventions in Iraq, Americans can continue to support a desired understanding of themselves as quintessentially moral actors.

Conceptually, through a gendered division of ideological labour rendered plausible by the cultural conditions described by Lakoff (2002) and Faludi (2007), morally problematic aspects of the situation in Iraq can be bracketed from awareness as the province of the protective masculine state, left free to pursue projects such as *Operation Warrior's Rage* (American Forces Press Service, 2005), while the feminised sistered city attends to programs with titles such as *Operation Iraqi Children* and *Shoes for Orphan Souls*. As with the religious vision celebrated by *Buckner Orphan Care*, American ‘citizen diplomats’, through their engagement in sister city activities with select Iraqi ‘partners’, can see the ideologies of their country’s political administration validated in specific humanitarian activities. As consensus objects, the sister

city relationships coordinating these programs exist to be ‘pointed or referred to’ (Blumer, 1967) as evidence of American goodness, rather than as a medium for productive communication across meaningful difference, as would be required for a boundary object.

Returning now to the implications for the sister cities model, the particular national metaphor of the citizen diplomat can be seen to have to come to dominate or engulf the universal metaphor of the human family within the concept component of the model, allowing for only one acceptable ‘definition of the situation’. The denial or avoidance of alternative perspectives on the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq is argued to have conferred disparate rewards at different scales of diplomatic engagement in sister city activities. For the conservative Bush administration, the urban subjects who answered its call to citizen diplomacy can be theoretically understood using Marxian terminology as a ‘reserve army’ of ideological labour, ready to be mobilised via the emotionally and morally resonant metaphor of sistered cities. For the American sister city actors themselves, however, the principal advantage of withdrawal into the compliant and vicarious role of ‘diplomatic wife’ is, I contend, the avoidance of political shame for their nation’s unacknowledged abuse of the human rights of the Iraqi people.

As of late 2009, it would appear that citizen diplomacy efforts such as U.S.-Iraqi sister city relationships have accomplished little by way of stemming the tide of global anti-Americanism (see Chiozza, 2009). Freeman (2006), who is a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, calls attention to the deficiency of the ‘misunderstood American’ frame, arguing for a more realistic self-appraisal of the country’s role in Middle Eastern affairs on the part of the

American political public. “We have lost international support”, he asserts, “not because foreigners hate our values but because they believe we are repudiating them and behaving contrary to them. ... We are a far better and courageous people than we currently appear. But when we do restore ourselves to mental balance, we will, I fear, find that decades are required – it will take decades – to rebuild the appeal and influence our post-9/11 psychosis took a mere five years to destroy”.

Regrettably, however, suggestions such as that proffered by Carlin (2008) indicate that popular understandings of U.S.-Iraqi sister city relationships may be moving even further towards a conceptual abstraction of the Iraqi people as homogenised and depersonalised recipients of American beneficence. Carlin’s (2008) sister city ‘plan’ is entirely U.S-centric, positioning Iraqi cities and their people as passive, apolitical objects in a lottery draw, preoccupied with American approval and manifesting a dormant potential that can only be awoken through the intervention of blameless and loving urban Americans.

Here’s the Plan: At a Mayor’s convention where the Mayors of every city in the Country come together, each city of Afghanistan and Iraq is entered into a lottery and every city in America adopts a village or city in one of these countries. Each American city makes a commitment to partner with their sister city to help the people uncover needs and to orchestrate solutions to meet each other to discuss specific problems that can be solved. Each city in America rallies the resources of that city to bring solutions to the problems that are uncovered in their sister city. What we may find is that the Afghanis and Iraqis need most is to know that people in America care about them. They need to know that we want to reach out to them to love them (2008:18).

A final cautionary note for participants in what I have termed 'consensus objects' is sounded by a case reported by Speckman (2003). After celebrating the fact that her home town's sister city ties were remaining strong, despite international disagreement over the Iraqi war, Jennifer Andelin, chair of the West Jordan Sister City foundation recalled a difficult situation which, to her mind, had been solved by her skills as a citizen diplomat. "With the war", writes Speckman,

Andelin has found herself more in the role of diplomat with her Russian friends, who e-mail or call and ask what she thinks of America's involvement in Iraq. Andelin's 20-year-old daughter, Kimberly, is serving in the military in Kuwait, which makes answering questions even more tricky. Russian leaders have spoken out against attacking Iraq. Andelin concluded a long answer to Votkinsk teacher, Natalia Rebrova, by calling for continued strong ties between the two countries. She called for peace, but also for a liberated people everywhere and to rid the world of a threat from a country believed to possess weapons of mass destruction (Speckman, 2003).

This chapter concludes my analysis of the sister city peace model. In the next chapter, I situate the insights of chapters three to six of this study within the wider context of culture-based sister city relationships, in which peace building can play a role that is less direct and purposive, but nevertheless of value in facilitating international communication.

Chapter Seven: Alternative directions

Background

The principal focus of this study has been the capacity of the sister cities peace model - applicable to sister city relationships in which international peace building is claimed to be a primary goal - to facilitate constructive communication across meaningful difference under conditions of ongoing geopolitical conflict. Through an analysis of four particular case studies, points of vulnerability have been identified in both the 'concept' and 'structure' components of the model, which, I propose, compromise the capacity of the model to deliver on the high expectations invested in it in political, academic and popular discourses.

In this penultimate chapter I change direction, in order to conduct an overview of three forms of practice which I propose are currently leading sister city enactments away from the goal of international peace building altogether. Culture based sister city relationships that are not specifically aimed at peace building, and which operate under conditions of less extreme stress than that generated by the Middle East conflict, have important implications for this study, in that they provide what are probably the most hospitable conditions for the creation of boundary objects. Such relationships are enacted when peaceful relations already exist between the countries concerned, and take on more of a 'peace maintenance' role. However, as seen in the examples discussed in chapters one and two, sister city relationships, like human relationships (Giddens, 1993), are fragile and easily undermined. The question directing the analysis in this chapter is therefore: how likely are existing cultural sister city relationships to foster international understanding and peace, albeit on a more modest scale?

The first, and least analytically complex of the three practices identified is the use of ‘separate spheres and hostile worlds’ (Zelizer, 2005) reasoning in strategic commerce-focused sister cities discourses. Temporal and spatial metaphors are employed in these discourses, effectively marginalising culture-focused inter-municipal relationships in favour of those that can be seen to be producing quantifiable economic return. The second is the enactment of metonymic wedding ceremonies in sistered cities, in which Chinese couples exchange marriage vows in ceremonies officiated by city mayors in their own city’s Western partner. The third is an as yet embryonic, but problematic turn towards sister city relationships with a national/ist focus in Australia. These include the development of urban-rural connections at the expense of international partnerships and an increasing preoccupation with the symbolism of the two World Wars.

Metaphors of ‘separate spheres and hostile worlds’

As a result of the global economic reforms affecting all levels of government in recent decades (see Farazmand, 1994, O’Toole, 2001b, Wallis and Dollery, 2002), local authorities are under increasing pressure to incorporate an economic focus into culture-based sister city relationships. In itself, this trend is by no means antithetical to a peace building agenda. On the contrary, as suggested in chapter two of this study, urban actors working towards the economic development of their own cities may act as productive contributors to sister city relationships as boundary objects, facilitating cooperation between participants from diverse social worlds at both local and international scales. Strong economic ties have also been argued to act independently as a deterrent to war between nations, since they harm the economies of assailant nations as

well as those of the assailed (Glick and Taylor, 2005). Carlone (2008) notes the permeability of symbolic boundaries dividing the cultural and economic spheres in actual practices of economic exchange. “Business people speak of corporate cultures, product manufacturers engage in identity branding, and work, friendships, and play merge at knowledge-intensive companies. The ‘soft’ sphere of values, ideas and meaning and the ‘hard’ domain of labor, wages and profit seem to draw nearer to one another” (2008:158). However in what Zelizer (2005) identifies as ‘separate spheres and hostile worlds’ reasoning, personal and economic transactions are commonly held to be not only mutually exclusive, but also mutually contaminating and generative of social disorder.

An old, influential tradition asserts the existence of separate spheres and hostile worlds. In this account, a sharp divide exists between intimate social relations and economic transactions. On one side, we discover a sphere of sentiment and solidarity; on the other, a sphere of calculation and efficiency. Left to itself, goes the doctrine, each works more or less automatically and well. But the two spheres remain hostile to each other. ... Their mixing, goes the theory, contaminates both; invasion of the sentimental world by instrumental rationality desiccates that world, while introduction of sentiment into rational transactions produces inefficiency, favoritism, cronyism, and other forms of corruption. Only markets cleansed of sentiment can generate true efficiency (2005:22-24).

Metaphors implying a symbolic contamination of ‘rightfully’ separate domains are ubiquitous in discourses asserting the sole legitimacy of instrumental rationality in sister city relationships. The principal contaminant suggested by such discourses is emotion – often conflated with ‘culture’, which, because of its indeterminate nature, “cannot be completely anticipated nor controlled”

(Bandelj, 2009:363). Nor can the benefits of emotionally gratifying exchanges be quantified, in order to justify to political adversaries, and to an often sceptical electorate, the allocation of 'hard' currency to their maintenance. 'Separate spheres and hostile worlds' reasoning in sister cities discourses is organised primarily around notions of time and space, which operate according to different conceptual logics.

Through temporal metaphors, culture-focused sister city relationships are represented as earlier phases in the life course or evolution of cities, or relics of a bygone era. Human life course metaphors, for example, portray cultural and 'emotional' sister city relationships as immature stages of international urban development, as seen in one Miami city commissioner's declaration that he was unconvinced that the city was getting value for money, and wanted to see it "wean itself of these feel-good programs" (Fooksman, 2001). At the other end of 'life', cultural/emotional sister city relationships are framed as dead or dying, with an editorial piece from the *Adelaide Advertiser* (2000) describing a shift to an emphasis on trade in the local sister cities program as "breathing new life into old ties" that had previously focused on cultural exchange. Evolutionary metaphors have a similar theme, but position cultural sister city relationships as a less developed or backward-looking stage of the species development of sister cities. Prominent urban sociologist Saskia Sassen (2002) invokes this frame when she argues that

(i)f cities were just places for theatres, et cetera, which is great, it would be different, but cities actually are crucial places in this global economic system. That makes for a certain kind of political possibility We are way beyond the sister-city programme. There was a time when the internationalism of cities was about sister cities which is more symbolic, cultural, which is very

fine, very important, today we have objective, binding cities into sort of necessary network, multiple necessary networks vis-à-vis some of these economic issues.

In the same vein, journalist Jake Batsell (2006) questions whether the sister cities program “has become a quaint relic in an era in which global business and multiculturalism pervade everyday life”, U.S. sister city official Ed Fisher reports that “sister city locations are chosen more strategically now, leaving symbolism in the past” (Newman, 2008), Japanese petroleum entrepreneur and sister cities delegate Soichiro Oya declares that “(t)he last decade was for cultural exchanges. The next decade will be for business” (Honan, 2000) and Australian Lord Mayor Lisa Scaffidi announces that she will outlaw sister-city ‘junkets’ that do not serve business purposes. “I think sister-city relationships have their place and have to be respected,” notes Scaffidi, “but there has to be a bit of evolution to make the sister cities useful in terms of trade and potential business connections” (Mayes, 2007). Of most concern for the peace building potential of sister city relationships is the fact that, when commercial interaction is understood in terms of evolution, moral and ethical issues are bracketed as irrelevant; “only the most appropriate (“fittest”) technologies survive and these will be the most advantageous and desirable” (Stahl, 2008:157-158).

Spatial metaphors mobilised in ‘separate spheres and hostile worlds’ rejections of culture based sister city relationships target their perceived loose and unbounded form. While economic relationships are typically represented as “hard-nosed” (*The Age*, 2004) and well defined, enabling “real benefits” to be “nailed down” (Batsell, 2006), spatial metaphors code cultural sister city

relationships as 'soft' and liminal. In the face of public scepticism, McCarten (2007), for example, argues that

all the council needs to do is put out some hard financial numbers and other benefits that justify these relationships. And if it can't, then scrap the idea of sister cities and be done with it. If the council doesn't justify them, these trips really do look like junkets for local-body politicians. Given the furore over rate rises, it doesn't take much to imagine what their political opponents will be saying during the city council elections this October.

In an editorial from the *New Zealand Times* (2007) a temporal metaphor ('outdated') is followed by spatially coded references to the intangible ('unbounded'), faded ('indeterminate colour') and jaded ('indeterminate appeal') of sister city relationships in general, which are consequently framed by a local mayor as deviant practices, whose very name can contaminate by association.

The very term "sister cities" has a 1980s sound to it. It evokes the goodwill and friendship festivals of a Cold War world, the era before globalisation in which such relationships might have opened bridges to cultural and economic ties. Many would have been surprised this week to learn that not only is Auckland City still investing in such intangible associations but is expanding its repertoire to include a "strategic alliance" with Hamburg, Germany's second city. That Mayor Dick Hubbard objects to one of his councillors having likened the Hamburg tie to a sister city relationship perhaps underscores the faded, jaded appeal of that programme (Editorial, *New Zealand Times*, 3/3/2007).

In their study of links between north and south healthcare institutions, James, Minett and Ollier (2008) note that "government bureaucrats like what they know and can manage directly. The twinning process ... is perceived as "warm

and fuzzy” therefore many are not particularly interested in it” (2008:74). The perils of emotional involvement in fiscal matters are suggested in one councillor’s assessment of a ‘backflip’ on the part Douglas Shire Council, which, having been ‘carried away by altruistic emotion’ in the aftermath of the 2005 Asian tsunami, had committed itself to a large annual donation to a humanitarian sister city program. “There are times when decisions are made in the heat of the moment and there was a warm fuzzy feeling about donating, Cr. Egan said. I think it is time to sit back and look at it. This year is a tight budget and there are plenty of local community groups looking for donations as well” (Port Douglas and Mossman Gazette, 2005).

Both spatial and temporal metaphors are invoked in another councillor’s statement that “the world had changed since sister city relationships first started. It used to be all warm fuzzies, but now there was no longer the need to have civic contacts” (Cousins, 2008). Anxiety and hostility regarding the indeterminate nature of cultural sister city relationships is implicit once again in the concluding comments of Kanelis (1998), who reports that

Amarillo has two "sister cities." But this city does next to nothing to promote those relationships ... [Mayor Kel Seliger] makes a persuasive case that sister city programs crafted between and among cities too often are a waste of time and, more importantly, taxpayers' money ... "We don't spend any money on the program," Seliger said recently in dismissing the notion that Amarillo somehow is missing a vital link with the rest of the world. "These sister city programs tend to be all fluff and little, if any, substance”.

“What’s problematic about Sister Cities programs” argues yet another journalist, “is that when you peer behind the gauzy promise of some soft-edged

civic good, it's hard to see any real benefits for the taxpayers who foot the bill" (*The Daily Press*, 2006). According to the editor of the *Northern Territory News* (2005), attempts to link the 'separate spheres' of economics and emotion are themselves 'shaky'. "Some aldermen say the Territory benefits from trade and tourism because of the program", writes the editor. "This is a shaky argument. Business people do trade deals for profit, not sentiment." To underscore his own scepticism, a Lakeland Economic Development Councillor declares that "Sister Cities is a warm and fuzzy thing, not something for economic benefit" (Rousos, 2000), while the Mayor of the Central Otago District uses the same dismissive metaphor to argue that instrumental economic connections can transcend what he sees as the limitations of emotional/cultural relationships.

So what might a sister city relationship with 800,000 people on the Great China Plain bring to Central Otago? First, a beachhead into China. If we want to sell into that market, then this can be our way in – with their government's support and endorsement, and the security of knowing that if something goes wrong, we can pick up the phone and hope to get it put right. In China, almost all the real power rests in the mayor's office. Then there are a wealth of educational opportunities – for Chinese students in New Zealand (the biggest and best chef's school in China has just been built in our prospective sister city), and for Kiwi students and teachers in China. There are labour supply opportunities, and investment opportunities – in both directions. If we endorse it, this will not just be a warm and fuzzy, let's be friends, kind of relationship. It can work for us, and it can work for our potential Chinese partners (Macpherson, 2008).

Since metaphors are, as noted by Miller (2006), "the very stuff of worlds promised or denied", the use of 'separate spheres and hostile worlds' reasoning can be seen to deny the crucial exchange of symbolic meaning necessary to

sustain a peace building boundary object, promising only a possibility of the hard and quantifiable reward of cash in the coffers of the instrumentally rational city. Much less overtly 'rational', but still nevertheless geared towards economic return, is the second alternative practice identified in current sister city relationships, the metonymic sister city wedding, in which 'romantic' cities are reflected back to urban subjects as objects of emotional and material consumption.

City symbolism: The spectacle of the metonymic wedding

In March, 2004, the Australian city of Melbourne entered into a sister city agreement with the Italian city of Milan. This was a strategic relationship, designed to develop economic ties between the fashion industries of both cities (Panichi, 2003), but the master frame invoked by both city officials and journalists for the signing of the agreement was not commerce but the highly personalised and aestheticised trope of romance. The commonly overlooked metaphoric slippage between 'sisters' and 'marriage partners' noted in chapter two is manifest in Munro's (2004) observation that

despite engaging in a sisterly association, officials from both cities insisted the relationship was romantic. Deputy Mayor Susan Riley revealed it was Melbourne who had "courted" Milan to form the association. "Now we are ready to fall in love," she said. So acknowledged that the two cities had already had a long association and that Melbourne had been influenced by Milan's food, fashion, culture and streetscapes. "But it's like any relationship, it takes time to build, this is a fruition of a love".

On the following day, an unnamed journalist from *The Age* described the relationship in similar terms.

Love was in the air in the Town Hall when the cities of Milan and Melbourne agreed to form a new sister city relationship this week. Italian and Australian officials waxed passionately about the new bond, abandoning the pretence that things were just platonic. "What is going on between Milano and Melbourne is a long, how can I say it, love story between two people," declared Italy's ambassador to Australia Dino Volpicelli (*The Age*, 2004).

The media coverage of this event performed two strategic functions in establishing interpretive consensus in the framing of this sister city relationship. In the first instance, it affirmed the discursive 'rebranding' of Melbourne as 'The City of Love' in the context of sister city relationships. City branding is a strategy of place marketing, in which a city presents a self-image of high distinctiveness and special appeal, designed to set it apart as unique in the minds of potential consumers (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). It is part of a wider trend for mayors and public officials of Western cities to include "not just production and growth, but consumption and entertainment in their agendas (Clark, 2004:8). Welsch (1997) notes that 'postmodern' aestheticisation processes designed to delight and attract consumers to urban spaces have become a feature of cities around the world.

The urban environment on the whole is being highly polished, embellished and beautified. This is called aestheticization. Nothing in our public space – no paving-stone, no door-handle, and certainly no public square – has been spared this aestheticization-boom. 'Live more beautifully' was yesterday's motto. Today it runs 'live, shop, communicate and sleep more beautifully ... The aestheticization wave ... is breaking everywhere. It has long-since conquered and washed over public space. Everything in this space is styled through and through. And the beauty which is thus engendered is full of gloss ... This is the finding from which one must today set out when speaking about public space: public space has become hyperaesthetic (Welsch, 1997:118-119)

Hage (2003) argues that the contemporary aestheticised city is geared more towards attracting wealthy visitors than enriching the lives of emplaced urban citizens, and reflects the global dominance of economic growth imperatives over obligations of democratic urban governance. People and practices that are not considered beautiful accordingly have no 'business' rendering themselves visible in such cities.

National and sub-national (such as state or provincial) governments all over the world are transformed from being primarily the managers of a national society to being the managers of the aesthetics of investment space. Among the many questions that guide government policy, one becomes increasingly paramount: how are we to make ourselves *attractive* enough to entice this transcendental capital hovering above us to land in our nation? ...The global aestheticised city is thus made beautiful to attract others rather than to make its local occupants feel at home within it. Thus even the government's commitment to city space stops being a commitment to society ...More so than any of its predecessors, the global city has no room for marginals (2003:19-20, emphasis in original).

The second function of the media framing of the Melbourne-Milan sister city relationship as a 'love match' also prioritises the aesthetic, and concerns the shaping of popular emotion with regard to that relationship. Through the imagery of cities – and, by metonymic implication, their populations – falling in love, potential urban consumers are guided towards understanding economically focused relationships within an aesthetic-emotional frame. Campbell (1989:76) contends that the easy capacity of human individuals to use their imaginations to evoke satisfyingly intense emotions is an achievement of a distinctively modern form of subjectivity, which valorises emotional

intensity as an end in itself. In the cultural transition to modernity, he argues, visibly being moved by experiences, even to the point of tears, became a means of identifying the person of sensibility, who could experience empathy with others and would therefore act benevolently towards them (1989:140).

As a later development in this same process, romantic love became historically embedded as a cultural value in Western society, and its continued salience underlies the success of the superficial romantic gloss seen in much consumer advertising. Illouz (1997) explains the benefits for positive identity maintenance of understanding consumption processes as romantic experiences. Romance-themed products and experiences, she argues, enable a subjective transcendence of less appealing aspects of commercial activity, such as status competition. “(S)ymbolic meanings enhance the ritualistic, no-utilitarian, and emotionally intense character of romance, thereby defusing the perception that one is involved in an act of consumption. The deeper the objective hold of the market on the romantic experience, the more ritualized and therefore more subjectively remote from the market this experience becomes” (1997:137).

Two years after the inauguration of the Melbourne-Milan sister city agreement, the public focus of Melbourne’s ‘love’ had shifted to its Chinese sister city of Tianjin. In this instance, the romantic attachment of the urban ‘lovers’ had progressed to its ultimate fruition, the metonymic ‘wedding’ of the cities through a public ceremony involving participants from both partners. On the 19th of November, 2006, seventy-one couples from the Tianjin took part in a collective ‘wedding’ ceremony in Melbourne’s Federation Square. This was a symbolic spectacle rather than an actual marriage contract, since the couples had already been married in civil ceremonies in China. Each couple had paid

approximately \$4000 to participate in the event, which was broadcast to 900 million Chinese viewers by Tianjin television. Also included the package, termed the 'romance tour', was a shopping expedition (Kelly, 2006). After alighting from water taxis, each couple, attired in Western-style white gowns and dark suits, walked down an aisle prepared for the purpose in Melbourne's Federation Square. A wedding march was played by the Chinese Music Ensemble, whilst assembled onlookers sprinkled the couples with fresh rose petals donated, as the result of a public appeal, by the people of Melbourne. As one local newspaper reported,

(b)efore saying their vows, the brides and grooms bowed three times in Chinese custom – once facing east in recognition of their parents, again to Melbourne Lord mayor John So and Tianjin Vice Mayor Madam Zhang, and then to each other. Cr So and Madam Zhang acted as witnesses. Melbourne City councillor David Wilson read the vows. Cr. So declared Melbourne the city of love. "Today we celebrate the most beautiful cultural exchange undertaken by the people of these two cities," he said (*Herald Sun*, 2006).

Three levels of metaphoric representation can be seen to be in operation in this description: the 'wedding' of the couples stands for a marriage of love between the cities of Melbourne and Tianjin, the exchange of wedding vows stands for the exchange of cultural meaning popularly expected of sistered cities, and the city officials – particularly Madam Zhang and the Australian 'celebrity mayor' (Kelly, 2006) John So - stand for the absent 'heads of family' of the couples on display.

Something of an oddity for twenty first century Western audiences, mass weddings are a common feature of non-Western kinship practices, enabling poor couples to take part in a government-funded, culturally

appropriate ceremony of commitment that would otherwise be beyond their means. The spirit of collective joy they engender (Jad, 2009) can also provide national and local politicians with an opportunity to invest romantic spectacles with political significance, ranging in intensity from the affirmation of national strength and resilience through politically charged group nuptials in Iraqi, Israeli and Palestinian towns (see Hawley, 2002, Kraft, 2006 and RiaNovisti, 2009, respectively) to the kind of publicity photo opportunity described in the following press release.

The sun was setting. The sky was clear, Soft wind was blowing from the sea. It was a most romantic moment and a place to say "I do" for 160 couples who participated in a mass wedding officiated by [the] Alaminos City Mayor ... Among their witnesses were Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero, a senatorial candidate and Vice Gov. Oscar Lambino. Elsewhere on the same day in Lucena City, at least 294 couples, the eldest in their 70s, were married in a mass wedding ceremony, which later became another campaign occasion for election candidates. Politicians of all stripes made a beeline to greet the newlyweds, with some posing for pictures with every couple. (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 17, 2007).

The promotion of group wedding practices by economically beleaguered Western cities as a means of income generation could suggest a tenuous correspondence between the neoliberal imperative of governmental cost-saving and the need for human couples wanting a spectacular wedding to reduce the financial costs of such luxuries. However frugality was unlikely to have been on the minds of the Chinese couples who were to be 'married' in Tianjin's sister city of Melbourne. Not only had each couple paid a considerable sum to be part of the spectacle, but the formal confirmation of their marriage contracts had been attended to well in advance of their departure. A more plausible

motivation is found with reference to the collective modernisation of Chinese cultural traditions, made possible by that country's emergence as a major force in the world economy. Citing Davis (2000), Gillette (2000:81) notes that "marketization and privatization have opened up a new space for Chinese citizens to express their personal taste, ideals and values". As material signifiers of cultural meaning, Western style wedding clothes have played an important role in this process. In China,

the introduction of "Western style wedding gowns and other consumer goods associated with weddings allowed young women and their families to define and present themselves publicly. The gowns evoked images of the West, cosmopolitanness, development, and to some extent wife – and motherhood. By choosing to wear these gowns, young women and their family members and friends who encouraged and collaborated in such consumption, associated themselves with these ideas (Gillette, 2000:81).

Group weddings are not entirely absent from the Western urban tradition, but operate exclusively as vehicles for expressive consumption. In the mid 1960s, for example, a group of Brooklyn businessmen, in conjunction with the city Parks Department, announced that Brooklyn would hold a

group wedding of unusual scale and beauty. The wedding festival seeks to revive the old Brooklyn tradition of marriage ceremonies held in Prospect Park at the turn of the century. Various Brooklyn stores have promised flowers, wedding gowns and assorted gifts for the bridal couples, and a gigantic wedding cake will be created for the event. In keeping with the spirit of love being celebrated, the community will be invited to come bearing flowers, rice, and food for the wedding feast. Couples who were wed in the park are also sought to share in the festivities as guests of honor. Only the first 50 couples who write to CUPID c/o Department of Parks ... may

participate in the Prospect Park Wedding (City of New York Department of Parks, 1967).

The involvement of city stores in the preparation of the forthcoming event, together with the public request for potential ‘guests’ to augment their good will with specific wedding-themed commodities, points to the overt and officially sanctioned appropriation of private sentiment by the growing wedding industry - a commercial force to be reckoned with in the twentieth century Western city. As noted by Boden (2003), the wedding industry mobilises a powerful rhetoric of romance in order to arouse previously unfelt desires in potential consumers.

Rather than a private commitment, the sister city wedding ritual as public spectacle resembles mass-mediated ‘celebrity weddings’ performed by stars of the entertainment industry and by members of royal families. For local onlookers and bystanders, the Melbourne-Tianjin sister city wedding offered a chance to vicariously consume a ‘romantic utopia’ (Illouz, 1997) of aestheticised love, rendered visible through product-mediated ritual and emotional expression. For the Melbourne city officials present at the sister city wedding, however, the significance of the public ceremony was more likely to be located in the commercial return it portended for their own municipality than its expressive framing as a romantic event. As well as the local sales it had generated, the film of the occasion was set to broadcast a highly positive image of the city to the millions of Chinese viewers who would, as a consequence, be encouraged to visit, and perhaps even court and marry in, the City of Love. As allegories of urban partnerships in the twenty first century, but in a form more akin to advertising than classical literary tradition, metonymic weddings allow

direct expression of a competitive commercial message that would otherwise not fit well within the sister cities imagery of romance and expressive commitment. Combining cognitive and emotional ‘message types’ and nostalgic and bizarre appeal, and evoking responses of both attention and empathy in potential consumers, (Stern, 1990)⁹, they offer an ideal vehicle for marketing the aestheticised twenty first century city within the global symbolic economy.

Public weddings do not, however, need to be conducted *en masse* to achieve these goals. Perhaps the most successful of such ventures in terms of its extensively publicised and multifaceted rewards for participants was a sister city ‘wedding’ that took place in the New Zealand city of Hastings in September, 2008, between a single Chinese couple, Chen Yanyan (also known as Caroline) and Gan Dan (also known as Daniel), from the Longsheng District of Guilin. Caroline and Daniel had won the wedding as the first prize in the cultural component of a promotional competition called ‘Ultimate Challenge’, in which couples from Guilin who were planning to marry in 2008 had answered questionnaires and taken part in interviews, in response to an advertisement placed in the *Guilin Daily*. The project was subsequently judged to be the best cultural project of the year at the annual Sister Cities Conference in Hamilton, New Zealand (Hastings City Council, 2009). The submission presented at that conference provides detailed information about the goals, development and outcome of the event. Its purpose had been both strategic, on the sense of bringing a range of economic benefits to Hastings, and expressive.

⁹ Stern (1990) provides an innovative study of the alignment of classical literary allegory and modern advertising, the implications of which suggest interesting possibilities for further research into the promotion of sister cities via metaphor and metonymy. Unfortunately however, a comprehensive account of Stern’s argument is beyond the scope of the present study.

In the city of Hastings, it reads, “it allowed our people to learn and share in the love story of a young couple from Guilin, culminating in their “dream” wedding in Hastings” (Sister Cities New Zealand, 2008:2).

The expressive value of the event for the Chinese couple and their New Zealand hosts is emphasised throughout the submission. When Caroline and Daniel were informed of their win, the submission reports, “(b)ig hugs, excitement, tears flowed as the realisation that their “impossible dream” could now become a beautiful reality” (2008:3). The dress worn by the bride, which “would capture all those elements a bride dreams of on her wedding day” was designed and made in, and donated by, the municipality of Hastings, thereby positioning the city within the gift economies of kinship (Zelizer, 2005) and of friendship (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2002:79) symbolised by hand-made wedding gowns in private weddings. During the ceremony itself, fictive kinship is formally and emotionally affirmed, as

a pure and majestic voice floats across the pagoda lake singing Pokarekare Ana, New Zealand's most famous, internationally recognised love song. The setting, the voice, the emotion as cultures come together sharing their most precious gifts in the name of love and goodwill is a poignant moment. Emotions cannot hold back the tears that are flowing freely when it is announced that [the singer,] Erina is the granddaughter of ... the writer of this most loved song ... Magnificent flowers, magnificent setting, magnificent music, candles, vestments, and cameras to catch the moments. This couple are so far away from their families on this day, yet the warmth and love of the people surrounding them would have left Caroline and Daniel in no doubt that they were now welcomed members of a far bigger, “international family” (2008:6-7).

In the retrospective framing of this metonymic wedding by its organisers, the event was an unqualified success - not only for the obvious pleasure it had brought to participants, and the publicity it had generated for the municipality and Hastings businesses, but for the contribution it was argued to have made to building world peace. Despite the liberal promotion of Hastings businesses throughout the submission, the wedding is identified primarily as a cultural project. “On reflection”, they concluded,

we believe the project delivered on all ... objectives, in some cases, even exceeding what we had dreamed of ... This project has reinforced our confidence in the value of community based Sister Cities projects. The international opportunities they create for people to people contact, cultural understanding and the bringing together of a new generation of people who through friendships and understanding across the globe daily, help make our world a safer place to live” (2008:1).

As vehicles of aestheticised communication, sister city ‘weddings’ can clearly bring positive returns to urban citizens and governments in terms of lifestyle enhancement and economic development. However their focus on expressive, commercialised ritual does not allow for the length or depth of interaction across difference necessary to sustain a boundary object. Furthermore, they divert attention away from more challenging, political forms of participation (Lofland, 1993) aimed at building peaceful relationships across less aesthetically attractive manifestations of difference.

From national to nationalist sister city discourses

The final example of alternative directions in sister city practices is the most troubling for its implications for international peace building. Although much

less common than international linkages, sister city relationships can also be formed between cities in the same country. Both economic and cultural factors are driving a developing Australian phenomenon noted by the Mayor of Leichhardt in chapter five of this study, namely the Local Government Association's encouragement of Australian municipalities to form sister city linkages within their own subnational spaces, rather than with international cities. While the stated aim of this suggestion is to address the disparity between the resources and capacities of urban and rural municipalities, discourses about such partnerships also mobilise culturally specific signifiers of moral meaning, in particular that of the Australian 'battler'. The concept of the battler symbolises cherished Australian national values of courage, egalitarianism and 'mateship'. It carries a particular meaning in the Australian vernacular, of a "person with few natural advantages, who works doggedly and with little reward, who struggles for a livelihood (and who displays courage in so doing)" (Australian National Dictionary Centre, 2008). Living and working in drought and flood prone rural areas of Australia, non-urban populations are common exemplars of the term in popular discourses. In May, 2007, the Local Government Association of New South Wales made a public announcement that the Minister for Local Government, Paul Lynch, had

urged city-based local councils to reach out and establish sister cities with rural and regional councils. Mr Lynch said a number of councils were actively pursuing sister city ties, going as far as staff exchanges and sharing IT services. "These sister cities are a great way to break down the barriers between the city and the bush," he said. "More significantly, city councils can play a very useful role in assisting rural and regional councils with planning and engineering work ... Sister city relationships between city and country councils can also open economic opportunities for regional and rural

councils'. He said international sister cities that were merely junkets for councillors were unfair on ratepayers ...Mr Lynch praised other councils that have established sister cities within New South Wales (Local Government Association of NSW, 2007).

One Victorian council that responded to the call, albeit in an unofficial capacity, was that of the inner-Eastern Melbourne municipality of Boroondara. In an article entitled *City offers country battlers a helping hand*, Bolling (2008) describes the mobilising of fictive kinship ties between the residents of a 'leafy' – hence water-rich – urban municipality and their 'cousins' living in an arid inland area of the state, mediated through their respective local authorities.

Victoria's leafiest council has adopted one of the state's driest areas as an unofficial sister city, teaming with community groups to support drought-ravaged Moira Shire residents. Boroondara Council, along with eight Rotary clubs, has opened its doors to the struggling northern Victorian council, offering fundraising and friendship. The Boroondara Cares program grew from residents who wanted to help battling country cousins. The program includes support for Moira produce, fundraising events, and exchange programs to give kids and families a break in Melbourne (2008:19).

The New South Wales minister's reference to international junkets points to a moral dimension of the recommended shift towards cheaper travel to same-state municipal partners. Rural Australian sistered cities and towns are consistently framed in such discourses as more worthy of assistance than their international counterparts. When scrutinised against the patent needs of country areas experiencing 'tough times', overseas travel by councillors funded through rates paid by battling farmers can seem like "a kick in the teeth" to local populations, especially when the destination – such a medieval German town

with “not one sheep within its walls” - is understood to be irrelevant to the realities of country life (Sikora, 2007). Within subnational states framed as domestic spaces, city councils are said to be ‘ignoring their backyards’ and ‘insulting’ their ratepayers through their appropriation of public funds to address international issues (Saleh, 2007). Grennan (2008) frames a turning away from the terminology of ‘sister cities’ as evidence of an improved moral direction for local councils, exemplified by Australian city-to-country partnerships.

Like many remote shires with a very limited revenue base Central Darling struggles to find the resources to service its far-flung community. And like many urban councils Ryde is not exactly flush with resources but wants to develop ties with its Australian bush heritage. They are two of about 20 NSW councils which have formed a new type of "sister city" relationship, one between city and country rather than with an exotic overseas destination offering the occasional junket for mayors and councillors. There's even a politically correct term for these new, more altruistic relationships: "strategic partnership alliances" (2008:31).

Similarly, in his article *Modest sister cities doing it for ourselves*, Lewis (2007) frames mateship-driven urban-rural partnerships as deeper and more morally worthy than what he sees as status-driven international partnerships. As an added bonus, these incur little or no backlash from local voters, who understand the relationships as part of a more authentically emplaced system of social obligations.

There was a time when the must-have status symbol for Sydney councils was a sister city in the US, Japan or Europe ... But with encouragement from the State Government, relationships are increasingly being built with bush

councils instead. A trip to West Wyalong may not be as glamorous as one to Paris, but it does not spark ratepayer fury. And some of the new relationships go deeper than the traditional sporting and cultural exchanges. On the rain-soaked North Shore yesterday, the mayor of drought-parched Bland Shire in western NSW sealed his council's new relationship with Ku-ring-gai Council ...Cr Malicki said there had been a lot of talk at last year's Local Government Association annual conference about the drought, and Ku-ring-gai had always received great help from country people when it had been affected by bushfires and storms. "I always wanted to pay back the favour," she said. "I said to the mayor [of Bland], we can't bring rain but we can bring mateship."

Such discursive constructions of partnerships between urban and rural municipalities indicate a categorical rejection of the international peace building model of peace building, and, as a consequence, of the international boundary object function that they could potentially serve. Nevertheless, the goodwill and reciprocity they mobilise carries a potential for enhancing communication across difference *within* nations, especially between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, as suggested by Mayor Allen in chapter five. In this respect, they may complement, rather than undermine, more traditional forms of sister city relations. However the inauguration of what an unnamed reporter for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) frames as a "unique sister city arrangement" between two Australian municipalities suggests that a step further along the path of social exclusion of particular international others may be about to be taken.

The Lachlan Shire Council has officially been taken under the wing of a western Sydney council. A special ceremony was held in Condobolin last night. The Mayors of Lachlan and Penrith signed the friendship agreement watched over by Local Government Minister Kerry Hickey as guests broke into an impromptu rendition of *We Are Australian*. The unique sister city

arrangement will see the councils facilitate exchanges between schools, sports clubs, arts groups and their own employees. The Mayor of Penrith, John Thain, says the deal meant his city was already better understanding of the complex issues of rural areas and the values they are built on. The Mayors of Orange, Narromine, Forbes, Cobar, Weddin and Carathool were among more than 200 guests to hear Mr Hickey say he would be pushing for similar deals among more of the state's councils (ABC, 2006, emphasis in original).

The title of the song chosen - seemingly spontaneously - to express the collective emotion of the assembled guests that night in Condobolin foreshadows the emergence of a potentially problematic aspect of this development in Australian sister city discourses: the combined mobilisation of national and sister city symbolism around ideologies of nationalism. As can be seen in the essentialist logic demonstrated by American journalist Logan Jenkins (2004, below), the entailments of kinship metaphors with respect to national space, and particularly those that invoke blood connections, can lead to a parochial reduction of scope in the identification of 'worthy' sister city partners. The outcome is an agenda less concerned with peace building than with 'consumer nationalism' (Wang, 2005) - a preference for the aesthetic consumption of cultural difference through sister cities within the space of the nation. Lamenting the fact that "not one of San Diego's sisters lives in the United States", Jenkins writes that

I confess I was shocked at what a huge sorority San Diego has assembled over the years. To my mind, Tijuana is the only one of the bevy that makes practical sense. San Diego and Tijuana ... share history and geography, the DNA of civic existence ... San Diego's Horton is also the father of Hortonville, the child to which he gave his name. Now, it can be argued that San Diego and Hortonville are worlds apart. For example, 97 percent of the

residents of Hortonville are white non-Hispanics. Diversity appears to be a foreign concept. Still, a case can be made that Hortonville should be adopted as San Diego's "little sister," if you will. After all, the two cities spring from the loins of the same father, which is more than can be said of the others in the globe-trotting sorority. In honor of their prolific father, two blood relations, worlds apart in every way, should embrace each other like the sisters they are (Jenkins, 2004).

Jenkins' article may be at least partly tongue-in-cheek, but it is significant for its overt illustration of the perils of understanding inter-municipal relations in terms of blood ties. Even more potent than the image of consanguinal kinship, however, is that of blood shed in the defence of home and hearth. In the context of Australian sister cities, nationalist discourses draw on the revered Anzac (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day commemorations of the blood sacrifice of Australian and New Zealand youth in the First World War. Slade (2003) summarises the historical significance of this tradition as follows.

At dawn on April 25, 1915, Australian soldiers went into battle against Turks at Gallipoli. New Zealanders followed them at around 9:15 am on the same day. About eight months later, during the night of December 19, 1915, the combined force withdrew from the peninsula by boarding ships. ... These summary facts point to a military defeat for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) and the rest of the allied force involved, yet the debacle gave rise to the legend of the army, the introduction of some new words into the English language, and a belief that the people from the two countries were different from those originating from the United Kingdom. However, probably the greatest significance of Gallipoli for Australians and New Zealanders is that it marks and represents the psychological birthplace of both countries as nations (2003:779-780).

As British journalist Bridget Kendall (2010) remarks, the intensity of Australian attachment to the Anzac tradition can be difficult for non-Australians to comprehend. Slade (2003) also comments that “(t)here can be few, if any, other places and instances in the world where a battle site marks the birth of a nation, thousands of kilometres away from it, and fighting which represents an ostensible defeat” (2003:780). Light is shed on this apparent puzzle by the observations of Australian historian Marilyn Lake (2010). In a public discussion broadcast as part of the 2010 *Melbourne International Arts Festival*, Lake explained the cultural resonance of the events at Gallipoli by identifying the Anzac hero as the central figure in Australia’s ‘creation story’. While other countries’ independence days constitute their ‘national day’, she argued, Australia is not yet independent, so looks to a historical war for a symbol of its ‘coming of age’. As a consequence, the ‘blooding’ of young Australian men at Gallipoli has been elevated into Australia’s national legend, symbolising the young country’s loss of its colonial status. Crucially, argues Lake (2010), the fact that the Australian force was defeated in that battle is of little significance. Rather, what is celebrated is “the mettle of the men themselves; their loyalty, mateship and courage”.

The symbolism of blood imagery in Anzac themed sister city discourses renders more concrete and literal the hitherto metaphorical allusion to battle in the notion of the Australian ‘battler’. In July, 2008, an unnamed writer for the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (ABC) reported on the efforts of a Victorian local official to mobilise an ‘ethnic ties’ variant of the traditional sister cities model, in order to recognise the historical bond that had been created between Australia and Turkey through the experience of Gallipoli.

Both sides had shed blood in the same time and place, but the Turks had been the enemies of the fallen troops, and directly responsible for their demise.

However the respect that the Turks had demonstrated for the courage of dead Australian soldiers, and the compassion they had expressed for their families¹⁰, marked Australians and Turks as moral ‘comrades in arms’ (see Slade, 2003).

This was the basis of a sister city proposal, over ninety years later, presented to the Turkish authorities.

A Mildura Rural City councillor is pushing for the city to forge a sister city relationship with a city in Turkey. Cr Knight, who has recently returned from a Turkish study tour, says a quarter of Mildura's non-Australian born population comes from Turkey. He says it is also the basis for one of Australia's most important national days, Anzac Day. "As soon as we and our delegation were identified as Australians the immediate response was 'you are an Anzac' and you were almost embraced," he said. "[It is a] community on the other side of the world who almost regard us as blood brothers" (ABC, 2008).

In the same month, Mark Day of the *Australian* newspaper reported that the Western Australian city of Albany was about to enter into a sister city agreement with the French town of Peronne on the basis of historical wartime connections. The Anzac connection is again invoked in Day's account, as is the metaphor of kinship through blood shed in battle, but in this case, the Australian soldiers are unambiguously identified as victors.

Ninety years ago next month, Australian soldiers ... liberated the French market town of Peronne. Today, the people of Peronne are saying thank you by establishing a sister-city relationship with the West Australian city of

¹⁰ Brown (2008) also notes that “the Anzac site ... is Turkish land and ultimately it is due to the good grace of the Turkish Government that Anzac Day [ceremonial commemoration] continues on site”.

Albany. It is a relationship rich in Anzac history. Albany was the first stop for thousands of Australian troops destined to fight in Gallipoli and the Western front of France ... Albany was also the site of the first Anzac dawn service, now a tradition around the world. In a speech welcoming the 750 tour participants, Peronne Mayor Valerie Kumm said ... ``We consider Australians as our brothers. The memory of the price which Australian soldiers paid for our freedom is still vivid here" ... Following discussions with local MP Matt Benson and council officers, Ms Kumm last week wrote to her Albany counterpart, Mayor Milton Evans, inviting him and a delegation from Australia to Peronne's Armistice Day 90th anniversary commemorations in November, when the relationship is expected to be formally signed. "This is a relationship built on blood", Mr Benson said (Day, 2008:7).

The trope of blood connection is one of the most significant conceptual frames connecting individual subjects with 'imagined national communities' (Anderson, 1983). Blood symbolism links what is universally recognisable – the experience of embodiment – with the more selective awareness of belonging to a nation. Via rituals of remembrance such as Anzac Day services, the symbolism of the spilt blood of national heroes and fallen soldiers travels across time to ennoble present populations (see James, 2006:179). The incorporation of nationalist, blood-themed Anzac ceremonies into sister city relationships enables consanguinal and fictive forms of kinship ties to combine, adding strength and verisimilitude to the cultural/historical matrix supporting this 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm, 2003:1).

(T)he 'blood' of consanguinal ties is always already a cultural category that only comes to social life in and through other modalities of integration. ... [One] form, defined primarily in terms of temporality, involves *ritual relations of connection*, for example, as *extended* kinship rituals through marriage or adoption – the kith side of 'kith and kin'. These rituals serve initially to place and then continually to reconfirm the ongoing presence of the

persons in simultaneous time across generational separation. [Another] can be understood in terms of a particular way of knowing, that is, through perceptual relations ... In intersection with consanguinal relations, the notion of perceptual relations allows us to understand what the anthropologists call 'fictive kinship', - consanguineous relations that are not based on actual blood ties but nevertheless involve an enacting of the perception that the blood-like ties do exist and are binding (James, 2006:84-85, emphasis in original).

Of particular significance for the present study are the observations of Australian novelist Kate Grenville, who throws light upon a 'shadow' dimension of the Anzac legend; namely the role it plays in masking the collective shame felt by Australians for their country's treatment of indigenous populations in the distant past¹¹. In a manifestation of what Lewis (1971) would recognise as unacknowledged, or bypassed shame, and which I have identified specifically in the context of U.S-Iraqi sister city discourses as 'political shame', Grenville argues that the Gallipoli legend serves as a positive mirror image of Australia's discreditable past. "Gallipoli is like the public face of our history", she explains, "and it's actually a very neat parallel with the hidden, shameful history of our country. In 1788, a boatload of mainly British people was sent, at the behest of the British government, to invade a foreign country, which is precisely the Gallipoli image. So in a way, it's like we're prepared to celebrate the sort of shadow of the real history. We're not quite yet up to saying, let's have a look at the stuff that happened in 1788".

A major risk posed by the use of sister city relationships to merge themes of embodied and fictive kinship based on spilt blood is that it can revive, or perpetuate in the collective memory, hostility towards former

¹¹ This argument is equally if not more pertinent to the present. In recent times, Australia has been condemned by the United Nations for its treatment of its indigenous populations (see Sharp and Arup, 2009).

wartime enemies who, unlike the Turks, have not been publicly redeemed and emotionally reclassified as kin. An obvious candidate to be singled out in the context of Australian history is Japan, which, through its bombing of the Northern Territory capital of Darwin in 1942, became the only foreign adversary to mount an attack on Australian soil. Two stories from the *Northern Territory News* illustrate the framing of the Japanese as a morally problematic ‘other’ to the Australians and Chinese, who are linked both as fictive sisters and as wartime victims of the Japanese.

Five Darwin council delegates will visit China as part of a \$45,000 plan to commemorate a group of Territory prisoners of war. The delegation will visit Darwin's sister city Haikou on Hainan Island, off the southern Chinese coast. Darwin Lord Mayor Peter Adamson will lead the delegation to unveil a memorial plaque to the soldiers of Gull Force ...In October 1942 the Japanese took 263 captured Gull Force soldiers to Hainan Island. In two-and-a-half years, 81 had died from malnutrition, overwork or beatings. Of the survivors, only eight are alive. It is planned the plaque in China will be unveiled on Anzac Day - April 25 (*The Northern Territory News*, March 2003)

Four months later, reminders of the harsh wartime treatment of Australians at the hands of the Japanese were again brought to the public’s attention, with the same newspaper reporting that

Australian prisoners of war will be recognised for their suffering at the hands of the Japanese during World War II. A ceremony to honour the PoWs will be held at the Cenotaph in Darwin's Bicentennial Park on Saturday at 4.30pm. Darwin and its sister city in China, Haikou, will lay duplicate plaques in memory of the Australian men and women taken prisoner by the Japanese. Lord Mayor Peter Adamson and former prisoner of war Athol “Tom” Pledger will dedicate the memorial (*The Northern Territory News*, July 2003).

This event represents just a single instance of two countries ‘teaming up’ against a former wartime adversary in the context of sister city relationships, but it becomes more disturbing when considered in the light of other expressions of anti-Japanese sentiment in sister city discourses. In 1997, a proposal to establish the ‘Canberra-Nara Peace Park’ to commemorate Canberra's sister city relationship with the Japanese city of Nara was strongly opposed by the local branch of the *Returned and Services League*, on the grounds of reprehensible Japanese conduct during World War Two. As noted in chapter one, the founding of that sister city relationship is attributed to a priest and former Japanese prisoner-of-war who had since worked to promote reconciliation between the Australian and Japanese people (Ochi, 2001, *Northern Rivers Echo*, 2003). Given this historical context, objections to the use of the term ‘peace’ in the naming of the park are particularly worrisome in their implications. Also interesting, in the light of the ‘sister city weddings’ trend detailed above, is the consequence of the dispute for a local international wedding venue.

Peace parks in other countries in the region have met with opposition, but many within and outside the *ACT* saw this proposal as particularly inappropriate in the nation's capital. The national president of the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) was concerned about "something so offensive to so many Australians [being] placed in such an important national precinct, launched so close to Anzac Day and without consultation" ... The word "peace" became the focus of the dispute. This contentious word was dropped in April after the Commonwealth threatened to refuse to gazette approval of the park. This allowed the project to go ahead, but a casualty of the dispute was a chapel to be built in the park for hosting Japanese overseas weddings, which did not proceed (Hughes, 1997:380).

More recently, Australian cities have been called upon to take their Japanese partners to task over their country's hunting of whales. In 2005, the Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Ian Campbell, urged the mayors of all Australian local authorities with a sister city in Japan to write to their Japanese counterparts conveying their disapproval of whaling (Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005). Having received no response from its sister city Tanabe to its expressions of concern, however, and noting the intention of the Japanese government "to escalate its 2007/08 kill by targeting whales such as Wyong Shire's sponsored Norah, the majestic and endangered humpback", the Wyong council voted to annul the relationship, so as to "recognise and respect its residents' and ratepayers' outrage on this issue". The minutes of the meeting also record the council's decision to redirect ratepayer funds that had supported the sister city relationship into local roads and footpath programs (Wyong Shire Council, 2007).

Whales have a particular symbolic resonance in the imaginaries of many, but not all, cultures. For the Inuit, present-day whaling provides a symbolic link to their spiritual and cultural heritage (Freeman, 1998:29). In most Western cultures, whales became key symbols of environmental risk in the early 1970s, achieving also a spiritual status through the seeming resistance of their species to unambiguous classification (Einarsson, 1993).

In the whale mythology of contemporary environmental discourse, whales straddle the Cartesian divide between animals and humans ... The moral consequences of humanizing whales is great as it transforms them from being potential natural resources into a very different category of animals ... Within this axiom there is no possibility of allowing the hunting of whales (1993:78) .

The whale, together with the other highly symbolic cetacean, the dolphin, is often understood to be motivated towards moral behaviour through being endowed with human values, as is seen stories of dolphins rescuing drowning swimmers (Einarsson, 1993:79). It is this attribution in particular that renders the killing of whales and dolphins repugnant to many Western sensibilities, and the perpetrators of such acts contaminating to the domestic spaces of the more morally worthy. Oquist (2005), for example, records Australian Greens Senator Bob Brown's call on the national government to ban whaling ships from ports such as Hobart in his home state of Tasmania. For Senator Brown, the very idea that whalers could obtain sustenance therein constituted symbolic pollution of the city. "It will run a shudder down Tasmanian spines" his statement reads, "to think that these whale killers are being replenished in Hobart".

Two years later, following shocking images of dolphin hunting publicised in the documentary film *The Cove* (Pepper, 2009), the New South Wales council of Warringah contacted its Japanese sister city of Chichibu, requesting the city's cooperation in bringing an immediate end to the "massacre" of dolphins in nearby Taiji (ABC News, 2009). A few weeks beforehand, the council of the Northern Territory pearling town of Broome had voted to suspend its sister city relationship with Taiji, a decision welcomed by environmentalist groups and by the Federal Minister for the Environment, Senator Campbell (Taylor, 2009). Several unintended consequences for some human inhabitants of Broome, however, cast a shadow over this putatively moral endeavour. The *ABC News* of August 27th reported that "councillors of Japanese heritage" had been "bombarded with hate mail" over the issue, and

that pictures of dolphins had been hung over graves in the local Japanese cemetery. On hearing of these developments, Senator Campbell, who had “personally urged the shire to abandon its connections with Taiji” (Taylor, 2009) declared himself to be “absolutely peeved that there’s a certain element in this town who are, in my opinion, inciting racist activities” (ABC News, 2009).

Theoretical implications

Taken in conjunction with the previous chapters, the evidence from this chapter suggests that the sister city movement as a peace building entity is in something of a crisis, and that, as far as a peace agenda is concerned, there may be no such stable category as a ‘safe sister’ for local authorities. The implications of this situation for local government endorsement and support of sister city peace projects are considered in the following chapter.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and conclusions

Ambiguity and ambivalence in sister city relationships

The data examined in this study speak to a longing for a more peaceful and interconnected world on the parts of sister city peace actors, but indicate that sister city relationships have a limited and possibly declining capacity to serve as a vehicle for achieving that goal. Sister city discourses raise the hopes and expectations of Americans and Australians that they can personally contribute to building world peace through structured collaborations between citizen groups and local governments. In practice, however, the peace building potential of such relationships is undermined by pervasive ambiguity and uncertainty as to their meaning and practice. When those meanings and practices are rendered visible by means of the analytical model I have provided, they are seen to generate instability, conflict or denial, which cause the model to fail under conditions of contextual stress. In the case of the relationships that formed the principal focus of this study, the catalyst for that stress was the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. The processes through which the model failed can be summed up as follows.

Sister city relationships are socially constructed objects that are brought into existence by the ways in which human actors think about and act towards them (Hewitt, 2003). Public discussions about particular proposals and relationships constitute discursive spaces in which the construction of formally institutionalised sister city partnerships is either enabled or prevented, via political lobbying, public gatherings, formal hearings and media representations. Responding to the risk event of the Middle East conflict, stakeholders, including national governments, local authorities and citizen

groups, converged within these spaces in order to send messages to each other about the sister city projects connected with that event. Sometimes these messages identified an external risk that the sister city relationship or proposal would alleviate, as in the case of peace actors who saw them as tools for reducing conflict and bloodshed in other parts of the world, and national governments seeking to ward off attacks on their legitimacy. Alternatively, they identified proposed sister city relationships as risks in themselves, in the form of threats to public order or symbolic pollutants of urban spaces, governments and citizens. Subsequently accepted or rejected sister city peace relationships involving Iraqi or Palestinian cities can thus be understood as purposive public achievements, through which individual and collective semantic distinctions, or symbolic boundaries, were translated into social boundaries, or structural inclusion or exclusion, at local, national and international scales.

Establishing productive communication across significant political and cultural difference is essential for building peace under the conditions of ongoing hostility that continue to endanger the future of the human race. As noted in a publication of the United Nations (2006:3), “(t)he need to build bridges between societies, to promote dialogue and understanding and to forge the collective political will to address the world’s imbalances has never been greater”. The ideal conceptual facilitator for this process has been identified in this study as the boundary object, whereby actors from different social worlds, who have diverse understandings of their joint endeavour, nevertheless work compatibly through their common orientation towards the object in question. In the process, all participants are exposed to, and become accustomed to,

disparate, but equally legitimate, perspectives. As elaborated in chapter two, a boundary object has two essential attributes: it is flexible enough to be adaptable within the wider meaning systems of diverse social worlds, but sufficiently robust to retain a stable core meaning across all of those worlds (Star and Griesemer, 1989).

Popular, scholarly and institutional sister city discourses stress the capacity of the sister cities movement for fostering constructive understanding across political, cultural and geographical difference, thereby suggesting that these relationships can serve a boundary object function. Under conditions of stress, however, the model structuring sister city peace focused relationships is found to possess only one of the necessary conditions of a boundary object. It exhibits a high level of semantic plasticity, allowing for a remarkably wide range of interpretations, but is insufficiently robust, retaining no core meaning across social worlds that can serve as a common referent when definitions of its proper application are disputed.

As will be recalled from chapter two, the sister cities model comprises a combination of ‘concept’ and ‘structure’ components. These, in turn, are composed of two parts, respectively the human family/citizen diplomat metaphoric blend and the local authority/citizen group dyad. Each of these components is vulnerable in a different way to pressures generated by contextual ambiguity. Under unchallenging conditions, the model is kept stable by an internal balance within its component parts. As attempts are sought to resolve high levels of ambiguity under conditions of risk, however, one part of each component comes to dominate or engulf the other, and this loss of stability weakens the model as a whole.

When a sister city relationship is proposed or established under stressful conditions, the model breaks down in each of its component parts and becomes incapable of forming a boundary object. Instead, two different kinds of objects are produced. Within the 'structure' component, a risk object is generated, in that particular proposals are understood by local authorities to be hazardous to social order. The agency of the citizen group proposing the relationship is engulfed by that of the local authority, and the proposal is consequently ejected from council agendas. As a result, no officially sanctioned communicative space for cooperation across meaningful difference is set up at the local level. This was the outcome of the Olympia-Rafah and Leichhardt-Hebron case studies examined in chapters three and five. Within the 'concept' component, a consensus object is produced. Consensus objects mimic boundary objects by creating an impression that communication across meaningful difference is being achieved, but in practice they only allow the legitimacy of one 'definition of the situation'. In consensus objects, participants' allegiance towards the universal construct (the human family) is engulfed by their allegiance to the particular construct (the nation state). This process has been illustrated through the case study of U.S-Iraqi sister city relationships in chapter six.

The Marrickville Bethlehem sister city relationship is a theoretical anomaly in this study, which can be explained by the uneven placement of stress on the sister cities model. In debates concerning this relationship, the contextual ambiguities, and hence the pressure on the model, were less severe, having been defused by an absence of contestation at the local scale. These conditions shaped the production of a more moderate, 'resisted' (Hilgarner,

1992) form of risk object, which retained the essential quality of agency on the international scale. The positions of these sister city projects on the ‘object continuum’ introduced in chapter two are seen in Figure 6, below.



Figure 6. Position of Middle East focused sister city peace projects on the object continuum

In applications of boundary objects, the focus of diverse interacting others is on *action*. Participants with different understandings of what a particular sister city relationship is for and about ‘get behind’ the relationship and push it forward, being exposed in the process to alternative, yet valid, interpretive frameworks. In the risk and consensus objects that were generated when the sister city model was placed under external pressures, the focus of sister city initiatives is seen to have shifted from action to *perception* – specifically, the perception of threatening risk. In risk objects, the sister city proposal is constructed as a *source of risk*, which, being held by local authorities to be of an unacceptable level, is ejected from councils’ agendas. In the case of a consensus object, the sister city relationship is mobilised as a *tool for managing risk*, which is regulated via sister city type relationships that affirm the risk manager’s perspective to the exclusion of all others. Either way, preoccupation with risk leads to the avoidance, denial or rejection of oppositional and threatening world views, effectively blocking the establishment of boundary objects that could facilitate sufficiently meaningful communicative interaction. The moderate, ‘resisted’ risk object, as exemplified

by the Marrickville-Bethlehem sister city relationship, is more ambiguous, in that it retains agency, but remains a site of contestation with regard to its status as a cause of or solution to negative risk. Questions of political power at local and national scales will inevitably determine the trajectory of this significant example of inter-municipal peace building at the international scale.

Naming the problem

The first step towards addressing what I have argued in the previous chapter may be a current crisis in sister city peace relationships has now been taken, in that the problem limiting the capacity of these relationships to serve as vehicles for global peace building has been named as ambiguity. Based on my own experience researching this thesis, I suspect that the ambiguity that pervades sister city discourses also accounts for the paucity of prior research into sister city relationships in general. The proposals and relationships that I have classified as consensus or risk objects were formed within social and structural contexts that were replete with ambiguity in multiple dimensions: the greater the ambiguity, the greater the stress, and the greater the likelihood that the hoped-for boundary object would fail. As Martin and Meyerson (1986) observe, ambiguity cannot be neatly classified as a negative or positive condition, since it can stimulate innovation as well as cause behavioural paralysis. Ambiguity with regard to organisational goals can aid in recruiting a wide range of support, as Lofland (1993) found in his study of consensus movements, but can cause frustration when the accomplishments of particular projects need to be evaluated (Sharkansky, 1999:54). In politically ambiguous contexts, “participants do not know exactly where they stand. There are no fixed boundaries or guidelines to behaviour that can be described as legitimate,

reasonable or acceptable. At the very least, ambiguity produces the stress of not knowing one's own limits or those of one's adversaries" (Sharkansky, 1999:60).

The necessary balance, I have contended, can be found by applying Star and Griesemer's (1989) concept of the boundary object. Some measure of ambiguity is indispensable for a boundary object, since it allows the semantic flexibility necessary for the transference of the object across domains. As noted by Martin and Meyerson (1986:23), "when innovation is the objective, people may be more willing to accept ambiguity", and keep working together regardless of interpretive disjuncture. However ambiguity overwhelms and undermines human creativity when it cannot be contained, so the plasticity of the object must be limited by a stable core meaning. Without this essential feature, stakeholders are unsure as to the limits of sister city peace relationships, or of their own capacities and obligations in relation to them. As a result, they tend to expect either too much or too little from the relationships, and to consider their own interpretations to be the only valid recipes for action.

In the case of the sister city proposals and relationships discussed in this thesis, highly ambiguous contextual conditions placed additional insupportable stresses on an already ambiguous and unstable model. The first of these was the ambiguity present in urban life in general. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, cities are inherently ambiguous entities, a condition attributed to classical sociological scholars to processes of modernisation.

Urban life is both the outcome and symbol of modernity and is indicative of the ambiguity of modernity itself. Thus, Durkheim, Marx and Weber ... all regarded urbanization with ambivalence. Durkheim hoped that urban life would be a space for creativity, progress and a new moral order while fearing

it would be the site of moral decay and anomie. For Weber, urban life was the cradle of modern industrial democracy whilst also engendering instrumental reason and the 'iron cage' of bureaucratic organization. Marx viewed the city as a sign of progress and the great leap of productivity which capitalism brought about while also observing that urban life was a site of poverty, indifference and squalor (Barker 2004:204),.

Compounding what may be termed the 'regular' ambiguities of urban life are specific conditions of uncertainty with respect to the sister city proposals discussed in this study. Taking first the example of the risk objects, ambiguities can be seen to inhere in understandings of (a) each of the cities involved and their governments, (b) the nature of sister city relationships in general, (c) council and citizen obligations towards sister city relationships, and (d) boundaries between political and cultural activities within the relationships under discussion. In the case of the Olympia-Rafah proposal, the setting itself was also a source of ambiguity (Buttny and Cohen, 2006).

Ambiguity in the 'risk objects'

Efforts to foster constructive communication with those who have very different and, from some perspectives, threatening worldviews will usually attract resistance from some quarter within the socio-politically diverse late modern city. In the case of Palestinian proposals, boundary ambiguity between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism and between Hamas the proscribed terrorist organisation and Hamas the stabilising local authority further complicated the process of resolution. For Vic Alhadeff of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, and for many Jewish opponents of the Olympia proposal, support for the state of Israel was an essential component of their Jewish identity. For these social actors, the boundary separating anti Zionism and anti-Semitism

was highly permeable¹², and in protecting the interests of the Israeli state they were protecting their own ontological security and that of the groups they represented. In the light of Bauman's (1995) insights into the link between the holocaust and Jewish statelessness quoted in chapter one of this study, this cannot be considered an irrational perspective, independently of its merits on other dimensions. For Jewish supporters of the Olympia relationship, and for Gael from the Inner West Chavurah¹³, however, there was no automatic connection between the two, and a critical stance on Israeli foreign policy was as pertinent and necessary as it was for that of any other macro-political power.

Also highly salient for Jewish opponents of the proposals was the widespread proscription of Hamas as a terrorist organisation in the Western world, although the exact application of that proscription varies between national and supranational governments and organisations.¹⁴ For supporters of the Olympia proposal, the status of Hamas was not a relevant aspect of their campaign, since Fatah, not Hamas, had won the 2006 elections in Rafah, but their efforts to communicate this distinction fell largely on deaf ears. For Jennifer, who represented the Friends of Bethlehem in our interview, the distinction between what she described as the political and military wings of Hamas was clear and also unproblematic, since she considered engagement with all dissenting political groups to be an imperative for peace building, regardless of acts of violence committed by those groups.

¹² See Zunes (1998) for an account of the discomfort felt by Middle East peace activists over this issue.

¹³ While her political orientation towards the Israeli state differed from that articulated by Vic Alhadeff, Gael also expressed serious concerns as to the permeable boundary separating anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism (see chapter five).

¹⁴ A 'List of proscribed terrorist organisations' in the West is available at [http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/%28153683DB7E984D23214BD871B2AC75E8%29~Attachment+A--+AG_s.PDF/\\$file/Attachment+A--+AG_s.PDF](http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/rwpattach.nsf/VAP/%28153683DB7E984D23214BD871B2AC75E8%29~Attachment+A--+AG_s.PDF/$file/Attachment+A--+AG_s.PDF)

Also dissonant from the perspectives of councils were proponents' and opponents' understandings of the proper role of local authorities within their own cities. In the view of many proponents, local councils were required to demonstrate courage in leading their cities towards participation in a global society, while for opponents, the legitimate scope and orientation of council was local and conservative. For the majority of councillors and some opponents in Olympia, as well as for the mayor of Leichhardt, citizen groups had an obligation to arrive at consensus before requesting council endorsement of sister city relationships. However in the views of proponents and the two councillors who voted in favour of the Rafah proposal, as well as for the Friends of Hebron peace group, it was incumbent upon council to overrule misguided local dissent in the higher interest of global peace building.

Culture and politics are ambiguous concepts and the boundary between them is unclear (Martin and Meyerson, 1986). Both, in addition, can carry both positive and negative valence. For most opponents of the Palestinian proposals, the term 'political' had disturbing connotations, but it was considered enabling by supporters. Proponents also drew less rigid distinctions between the cultural and the political, while opponents tended to see them as separate. As a result, the opposing councillors of Olympia, echoing those quoted by Maier (1987) in chapter one of this study, sought the security of drawing a clear line between the two. For the residents of Olympia, the context within which they debated the issue was also ambiguous, since public hearings are popularly understood as contradictory spaces, both enabling and constraining effective democratic participation (Buttny and Cohen, 2006).

Required to make an unambiguous decision within this context of high semantic and normative confusion, city councils understandably reject locally contested proposals. Sister city relationships are, after all, an optional extra for councils; in the terminology of the mayor of Leichhardt, they are ‘the icing on the cake’. Two entailments follow from Mayor Allen’s chosen metaphor: A cake that already tastes good does not need to be iced, although icing might make it taste a little better. Ideally, if enough resources are available to make icing an option, this is the action that will be taken. If, however, the icing is known to contain a contaminant, its addition will compromise the soundness and appeal of the cake as a whole, and it would be foolish and irresponsible for the baker to take that course. In the case of locally controversial sister city relationships, the contaminant is the negative risk they are seen to pose to the reputations of local authorities and to the stability of the cities they have been charged to govern.

Rendering a negative outcome for such proposals even more inevitable are the low consequences for councils of deciding against them. As clearly indicated by the councillors at the Olympia hearing, for example, the good work of the ORSCP could and would continue without council approval, and a perusal of that peace group’s current activities via an internet search engine reveals that that was exactly what occurred. Ultimately, however, the greatest source of reassurance for local councillors as risk managers is that they can fall back on legal definitions of their proper priorities, as exemplified in Mayor Allen’s comment in chapter four, that “the essence is that the pothole *is* our primary responsibility, legislatively it is”.

In the case of the Marrickville-Bethlehem relationship, the level of contextual ambiguity was considerably reduced by an absence of dissent at the local scale, resulting in a much less debilitating amount of pressure on the sister cities model. The Marrickville sister city initiative had been far from unproblematic *outside* its own local government area, attracting strong opposition from the Australian Federal Government, which was concerned about the risks it posed to the boundaries of its sovereignty, and from Vic Alhadeff on behalf of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, whose views were widely disseminated through the mainstream press. Inside the communicative space of the Marrickville local government area, however, ‘definitions of the situation’ were comparatively stable and coherent. No boundary object was therefore required to facilitate cooperation between the local authority and citizen groups, but the success of this proposal suggests that it carries the potential to develop into a boundary object at international and global scales. Local consensus can be seen to have been paramount in ensuring the success of this proposal, affording it sufficient strength to withstand the resistance of powerful non-local forces, but it does not constitute a consensus object, since it was produced spontaneously within the city as an outcome of collaboration within the local authority/citizen group dyad.

Like the ORSCP and its supporters in Olympia and the Friends of Hebron in Leichhardt, Councillor Iskandar and Friends of Bethlehem representative Jennifer understood their sister city endeavour to be a standard and unproblematic application of the sister cities peace building model. Cr. Iskandar’s responses demonstrate the resonance of the sister cities ideal within his personal and professional moral worldview, with respect to both

components of the sister cities model. Within the concept component, the human family metaphor expressed his deep desire for a resolution of the Middle East conflict in a way that would benefit the entire global community, while the citizen diplomat metaphor gave voice to his commitment to act as an international ambassador for Australia's multicultural values. In his estimation, all of Marrickville's sister city relationships represented opportunities to attenuate the risk amplification role played by the media in reporting peace issues in general, and to reduce the risks posed by misunderstanding and suspicion across cultural and political divisions. Within the 'structure' component of the model, his high level of community involvement and personal consultations with representatives of interest groups in his constituency had reassured him that council's pursuit of a sister city relationship with Bethlehem was a low risk endeavour, since it was endorsed by both elements of the citizen group/local authority dyad. Jennifer's responses were consistent with Cr. Iskandar's framing of the Bethlehem sister city project. To her mind, media representations of the relationship as inherently perilous were unsupported by logical reasoning, the objective evidence, or the principal tenet of peace building, namely that constructive communication with confronting and possibly disliked others¹⁵ is essential for overcoming peacelessness.

The focus of concern for the single dissenter within the council, Mayor Dimitrios Thanos, was the sister cities model as it was enacted within his own municipality, and his opposition to the Bethlehem project was moderated accordingly. For Mayor Thanos, there was a clear discrepancy between the

¹⁵ See Hess (2000) on productive interaction with disliked others as a regular and mundane requirement of modern societies.

promises suggested in discourses of sister city relationships in general, and what they actually delivered in practice. The local sister cities program was a source of negative risk for Marrickville council, in his opinion, on two dimensions. Neither of these compromised the validity of the Bethlehem peace initiative, which he supported in principle. In the first instance, its diversion of very limited municipal funds from much-needed local service delivery to international travel for councillors undermined the ethical integrity of council as a *local* authority. In the second, it attracted reputational risk to council as a violator of *international* civic hospitality norms, since Marrickville was demonstrably unable to match the luxury standard of treatment that had been extended by sister city partners on their home territory. In an ideal world, however, in which councils received a level of funding sufficient to address all of the legitimate expectations of stakeholders, he would have endorsed formal council approval of a sister city relationship with Bethlehem, since it reflected the international peace building ethos of local residents.

Because of the high level of risk it was understood to pose by powerful non-local opponents such as the Australian Federal government, the mainstream press and the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Marrickville-Bethlehem relationship became emplaced, but as the particular kind of risk object identified by Hilgartner (1992) as 'resistant to control'. Unlike the 'constructed' risk objects of Leichhardt and Olympia, this sister city risk object retained the crucial quality of agency, affording it the capacity to move towards serving a boundary object function at the international scale.

Ambiguity in the 'consensus objects'

A high level of ambiguity was also present in the U.S.-Iraqi sister city relationships that I have identified as 'consensus objects', but it was differentially located, being generative of the projects rather than a defining feature of their practice. Like constructed risk objects, such as those that arose in Olympia and Leichhardt, consensus objects keep communication across challenging levels of difference - a crucial component of peace building - off the agenda of local councils. In the examples of the U.S.-Iraqi sister city type relationships discussed in chapter six, there were no ambiguous and conflicting perspectives on the relationships to manage, since dissent had been screened out of the process from its inception. These relationships had been strategically produced as a tool for managing a negative risk; specifically, the reputational risk posed to the U.S. government and its citizens by the global negative reaction to its invasion of Iraq. As noted in chapter two, consensus objects are pseudo boundary objects, in that they deliver an erroneous impression that significant cultural and political difference is being transcended through their practice. For those who set up or rally around consensus objects, the management of reputational risk to the nation is paramount. Distressing ambiguity is central to this endeavour only in that it provides the catalyst for action.

Consensus objects are produced when the sister cities peace model is appropriated by the state, and by those who seek to preserve its interests, in order to resolve cognitive and emotional dissonance at national and international scales. In the U.S.-Iraqi sister city peace relationships discussed in chapter six, American citizen diplomats understood their government to be reducing the risk of perpetual peacelessness in Iraq, but in the view of most

international members of the ‘human family’, their government was a *source of* risk to the peace process. Underscoring the cognitive and emotional work necessary to address shameful or embarrassing episodes in national histories, Rivera (2008:613) poses the question “How does a country publicly come to terms with reputation-damaging events on an international stage?” In response, she argues that

public acknowledgment of reputation-damaging events is likely not to occur ... (C)ountries are likely to pursue a strategy of covering, rather than commemoration, when there are significant rewards for dissociation, concealment can be achieved “believably”, the event is recent, and there are no strong “agents of memory” other than the state to implement alternative visions of the past (2008:631).

In the case of the US-Iraqi consensus objects, the stigma under management was in the present, and it became incumbent on the state to mobilise and stabilise - via a process of ‘institutionalisation of public purpose’ (Krotz, 2007:406) - the marginalisation of alternative visions of its current policy. Social practices become powerful to the extent that they are able to reproduce the intersubjective meanings through which both social actors and social structures are constituted (Hopf, 1998:178). The objective truth of such meanings is not necessarily at issue, since “the hidden central issue in world risk society is how to *feign* control over the uncontrollable – in politics ... and in everyday life” (Beck, 2002:41, emphasis added). As Zerubavel (2002) observes, the psychological benefits to stakeholders of blocking unpleasant and difficult information from awareness increase the likelihood that the status quo will be preserved. Citizens who are strongly motivated to believe in the

righteousness of their political institutions are inclined to bracket disconfirming information in order to preserve an uncritical trust in governments that, on the basis of their policies and actions, do not deserve to be trusted (Scheff, 2005:376). This is not simply a matter of projection, since those experiences that are permitted to reach the conscious awareness of individuals provide external support for their attributions (2005:377). By presenting Americans with a pre-packaged variant of a trusted national-based peace building model, the U.S. government was able to strengthen domestic support for its foreign policies in Iraq by bringing local civic engagement into line with those policies. The exercise also appears to have been psychologically and emotionally gratifying for citizen volunteers, who understood themselves to be acting congruently as both members of the human family and diplomatic ambassadors for their country.

For much of the rest of the world, however, the U.S. government, and, by extension, the citizens who had elected it to power, were in breach of their moral obligations to the human family and their status within that family was consequently called into question. The internalisation of the critical perspective of a global scale 'generalised other' (Mead, 1922, cited in Gillespie, 2005) produced painful feelings of ambiguity and 'political shame' (Alweiss, 2003, Murphy, 2004) in the minds of the American public. Two resolutions to this discomfort were possible: Americans could either demonstrate attunement (Scheff, 2005) with challenging alternative perspectives by engaging in critical self-reflection, or 'bypass' the shame through repeatedly and uncritically re-asserting their own original perspective. The evidence from this study indicates that the latter path was chosen, and travelled by means of engaging in

cognitively and emotionally distractive sister city activities oriented towards discursively homogenised Iraqi cities.

As consensus objects, U.S-Iraqi sister city relationships provided both local politicians and citizen volunteers with an institutional enabling structure, by means of which they could avoid confronting political shame for the disastrous consequences of U.S. foreign policy in Iraq, even within their own minds. This phenomenon has been identified by Lewis (1971) as ‘bypassed shame’. For Americans involved in U.S-Iraqi sister city type relationships, positive stories and images of the U.S. occupation, together with carefully regulated interactions with Iraqis who had been previously classified as unlikely to challenge the U.S. or its citizens on any significant dimension, served to confirm their belief that their activities were helping to resolve the conflict. Negative outcomes of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq had become the ‘elephant in the room’, of which everyone was aware, but which no-one who wanted to retain membership in the ‘primary reference group’ of American patriots was normatively permitted to acknowledge (see Zerubavel, 2002:23).

Lacking the semantic strength to withstand dissonance within its constituent mobilising metaphors, the concept component of the sister cities peace model collapsed, with engulfment of the imperatives of the universal ‘human family’ metaphor by those of the particular ‘citizen diplomat’ metaphor. The consequent restitution of their positive subjective experience of American identity afforded tangible rewards for the sister city peace actors involved, but in a fragile form that constantly needed to be reinforced by affirmations of essential American goodness. In terms of political practice, the

willing and enthusiastic compliance of sister city actors with the Bush administration's framing of the causes of anti-Americanism allowed no avenue for receiving the strong corrective message being sent by the rest of the world – that it was not American *values* that were being condemned, but American *actions* as expressions of U.S. foreign policy. By ignoring this vital signal, American sister city peace actors were unwittingly perpetuating the very peacelessness that they were striving to correct.

Ideally, as asserted by Gawerc (2006:459), “people-to-people initiatives and dialogue would occur alongside political movement and structural change”. As illustrated in Figure 7 (below), however, in enactments of consensus objects, political dissent within the sister cities movement moves further back along the continuum of productive political engagement suggested by Lofland (1993), together with a corresponding shift in the dominant emotional motif he identifies in 1980s sister city peace actors. In place of the joy of spontaneous altruism that characterised ‘polite protestors’ involved in consensus *movements*, consensus *object* actors exhibit the uneasy and ambivalent emotional gratifications of an ever-vigilant and anxious conformity.

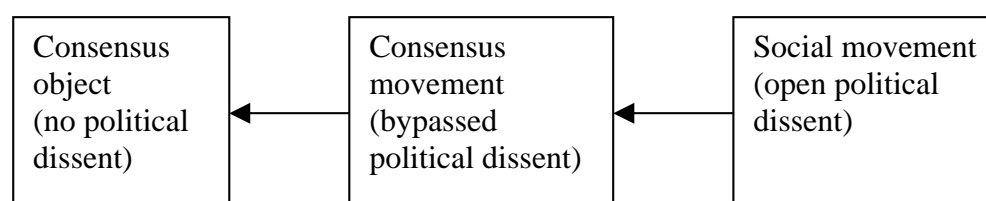


Figure 7. Position of consensus objects in relation to social and consensus movements.

Peaceful cities and belligerent states

The data and analysis from this study also reveal implications for understanding ambiguities in the relationship between cities and states in the late modern world. As discussed in chapter one, academic discourses commonly theorise the rise of the city as a global actor in terms of deficits exhibited by nation states. In this interpretation, cities perform a vacuum-filling rather than a strategic role, and are normatively cast in essentialist terms as innovative and pacifist alternatives to obsolete, inherently belligerent nation states. The sister city relationships examined in chapters three to seven, however, reveal a more ambiguous and ambivalent relationship between cities and states in American and Australian contexts, located within a high level of ambiguity and ambivalence in the very notion of ‘the city’.

For the contemporary urban subject, cities, and, by extension, relationships between cities, serve as salient cognitive resources for making sense of and addressing wider social processes. They are clearly ‘good to think with’¹⁶, in the anthropological sense posited by Lèvi- Strauss (1963). Metaphorical representations of cities as expressive actors capable of ‘falling in love’ and other forms of romantic or sympathetic identification demonstrate that they are also ‘good to *feel* with’. A disjuncture is uncovered between theory and practice, however, when attempts are made to ‘think and feel beyond the nation’ (Cheah and Robbins, 1998) via formalised sister city relationships. In such concrete instances, the symbolic and structural organisation of the late modern Western city can be seen to undermine rather than support a more inclusive, ‘cosmopolitan’ consciousness. Under

¹⁶ Although Lèvi-Strauss’ original phrase “bonnes à penser” is widely translated literally as “good to think”, this expression does not work well in English. The correct English language adaptation “good to think with” captures the meaning intended by Lèvi-Strauss (Leach, 1970).

conditions of ongoing geopolitical conflict, the nation state is shown to be an enduring primary referent constraining sister city relationships as a mode of local-to-global civic engagement. This finding is in direct opposition to optimistic predictions of a cohesive new order based on human solidarity and to notions of the nation state as an enfeebled irrelevance in a borderless, globalised world. Although its specific focus has been sister city relationships, this thesis has thus made a grounded contribution to the wider debate and academic literature concerning the role of cities in processes of globalisation.

Municipal partnerships operating as consensus objects cast doubt on Honig's (1997:131) claim that sister city relationships may "interrupt projects of (re)nationalisation" and on Galtung's (2000) contention that "cities do not act as depositories of national traumas and myths, which can foster a pathological sense of special status and unique destiny". As suggested by the U.S-Iraqi sister city discourses examined in chapter six, harnessing the sister city model in order to produce consensus objects allows the transfer of just such ideologies from the state to the city, and thence to collective and individual consciousness. Such processes do not bode well for visions of a global peace culture through sister city relationships. An ideological transition from 'national' to 'nationalist' orientations, together with a transfer of "national traumas and myths" from the national to the urban scale can also be seen in the data on Australian Anzac themed sister city relationships in chapter seven. Here, the focus of the relationships shifts from future peace to past wars, resurrecting fading enmities in the process. When combined with assertions of a more 'civilised' national sensibility, as seen in the debate over the hunting of whales and dolphins, they can result in a targeting of particular nationalities for

exclusion from the sister city sorority, and perhaps even from the human family. In the post-war period, the Japanese government strongly embraced the healing potential of sister city relationships, despite the appalling devastation wrought on its home territory, and continues to be among the strongest supporters of the movement. If this nation can be marginalised from the 'human family' on the basis of past and present misdemeanours, the question arises as to whether any nation at all can be consistently held to be worthy of the sister city ideal.

Another source of conceptual indeterminacy is the 'Eisenhower story' invoked in Australian as well as American sister city discourses. The entreaty of a serving U.S. president for 'ordinary' citizens to "get together and ... leap governments - if necessary to evade governments" (Eisenhower, 1956) in order to build cross-cultural peace implies a global rather than a national agenda, and distances people to people programs from the taint of nationalist propaganda (Endy, 2004:146). What is obscured in this fanning, however, is the reality that the governments to be 'leapt' and 'evaded' are not meant to include those of the Western peace actors themselves. In democratic societies, both urban and national governments are elected by the people, but sister city discourses frame national governments as separate, independent entities, which can be 'helped', but not confronted or opposed. The consequences of dissent are evident in the extensive restrictions and even harassment (see Venceremos Brigade, n/d) experienced by Cuban sister city peace actors over the past three decades in the United States, and in the opposition of the Australian government to Palestinian focused sister city peace relationships within its borders.

Generating further ambiguity are indirect forms of communication between the national governments of the United States and Australia and the urban authorities that formally approve, and direct the activities of, sister city relationships. As illustrated by First Lady Laura Bush's spontaneous announcement of the U.S-Iraqi sister city partnerships, under conditions of national crisis, communication with local councils may come only after decisions have been made 'behind closed doors' at the national scale. Although subsequently recognised by urban authorities, an uneasy tension overshadows the integrity and authenticity of such relationships. Most American sister city relationships are mediated through the organisation *Sister Cities International (SCI)*, which itself has an ambiguous relationship to the Federal government. SCI consistently promotes itself as having a global agenda, but acknowledges that it is first and foremost a national organisation with a primary responsibility to American cities. In order to maintain an illusion of distance, the U.S. government has historically used this organisation as an intermediary to regulate official recognition and support of sister city activities. The honorary president of SCI is the serving President of the United States, and the organisation has historically refused to approve relationships with cities located in countries that do not have diplomatic relations with its own nation state. At the same time, it describes itself ('Sister Cities International Statistics', n/d) as an independently operating, 'grassroots' organisation, which petitions the Federal government on issues such as visa restrictions that prohibit sister city delegates from politically problematic countries from attending sister city conventions and related activities on American soil (see Kasang, 2006).

As the Bush administration had done in introducing the ‘positive’ initiative of U.S-Iraqi sister city relationships to the American people, the Australian government is seen in chapters four and five to have used the news media and its own police force as conduits for communicating its disapproval of formal sister city connections between the Marrickville and Leichhardt municipalities and the Palestinian cities of Bethlehem and Hebron. Lacking any legislative power with respect to sister city relationships (O’Toole, 2000), both the Howard and Rudd governments shied away from direct communication with the municipal authorities they were censuring. Instead, they made sweeping, normative statements to the mainstream press that sought to undermine the integrity of those peace projects and intervened in the activities of a local community peace group. In these instances, the ‘timid’ and bypassed dissent of Lofland’s (1993) ‘consensus movement’ actors is incongruously displayed by the Australian state.

More generally, the essentialist framing of cities as peace actors in sister city discourses glosses over dissident elements and forces that also constitute the demographically and ideologically complex twenty-first century city and which need to be taken into account in urban governance. As Marcuse (2005) observes, understanding the city as a unified and homogenous entity

can deny the legitimacy of conflict: what is good for any part of the city is good for all within it ... (I)n fact the city is not one actor; actors within it determine its course, and that course generally favours some more than others, some to the detriment of others. ... These views of ‘the city’ support a search for consensus politics, in which the claims of minority or powerless or disenfranchised or non-mainstream groups are considered disturbing factors in the quest for policies benefiting ‘the whole’ ... (A)ny socially just public policy must deal with the conflicts of interest, the contradictions, the issues of

distributional equity, the varying possession of power and economic position, of the multiple elements that are located within the physical and jurisdictional space of cities ... By using the term as if there really were such a thing as 'the' city, a homogeneous entity, a unified actor, we divert attention from real issues of policy and planning, and generally in a direction supporting the idea that what is good for the dominant sectors of the city is good for the people of the city as a whole (2005:252).

From 'class society' to 'risk society'

As noted in chapter one, sister city relationships have always been predicated on the need to manage risk, but historical changes in understandings of the nature of risk, and the kinds of risks perceived as most salient, pose challenges to the viability of this essentially modern project in the late modern world. In their belief that a more peaceful and just world can and should be created through human endeavour, sister city peace actors articulate the positive value system that Beck (2005) equates with 'class society'. Class society values are oriented towards constructive change in the pursuit of equality and improved quality of life for all human beings. Accordingly, sister city peace actors focus on areas of the world that are most in need, such as war-torn areas in the Middle East, and are confident that their joint contributions can make a positive difference. The interpretive frames utilised by most opponents of the Palestinian proposals in this study, in contrast, demonstrate aspects of the defensive value system that Beck (2005) sees as indicative of 'risk society'. Beck (2005:49) contends that the "basis and motivating force" in risk society is not progress, but safety. Risk society actors are thus constantly attentive, reflexively monitoring all instances of social change and speculating as to what the consequences of those changes might be. Not only are risks now

understood to be less predictable, they are also framed in exclusively negative terms that emphasise security and stability at the expense of positive innovation. As a result, voices of concern and alarm are more likely to be received, amplified and given credence in contested sister city debates than voices of optimism and hope. This tendency can be seen in the Olympia and Leichhardt case studies in chapters three and five. The risks that both citizen opponents and the majority of councillors in Olympia perceived that a formal sister city relationship with Rafah would pose for their city were ultimately judged to be more relevant and pressing than the peace building agenda of the ORSCP and its supporters. The sister city debates examined in this thesis can thus be theoretically located on the cusp of change from ‘class society’ to ‘risk society’.

Of particular interest is the nature of the risks preoccupying those who reject or oppose sister city proposals with Palestinian cities, thereby producing risk objects. Since the terrorist attacks of ‘9/11’, urban spaces have become the focus of a dominant politics of fear (Furedi, 2002, Mythen and Walklate, 2006), and protecting them from the risk of attack is now a priority for urban managers (Coaffee, O'Hare and Hawkesworth, 2009). Weigert (2003) frames the threat of the terrorist ‘other’ as a threat to public order, in that it undermines generalised trust in unknown ‘others’. Citing Rapoport (1999), he notes that terrorists erase “classical distinctions between innocent and guilty or combatant or noncombatant by defining all participants in a target nation as worthy of death” (2003:95). Gray and Wyly (2007:338) argue that “a pervasive discourse of risk and fear is changing the purpose, scope and methods of urban planning” (see also Denzin, 2003:223). “Increased attention

is now being paid to how individuals and a broad range of local communities might become more responsible for their own risk management”, reflect Coaffee and Rogers (2008), and “citizens are being mobilised in pursuit of this goal” (2008:102). Sister city relationships extend the boundaries of the contemporary insecure city in fictive kinship with international urban others who are, in reality, strangers to each other, but who come together for sister city activities. Ultimately, as Bauman (2005) reminds us, the intentions of strangers cannot be known; “(t)he gathering of strangers is a site of endemic and incurable *unpredictability* ... Strangers embody *risk*” (2005:166, emphasis in original). Given this climate of vigilance and suspicion, it could be anticipated that, in proposed partnerships with cities that are commonly associated with terrorist activity in Western political discourses, the kind of negative risks prioritised by national and urban governments and their citizens would be directly related to the fear of physical attack. Almost nowhere to be seen in the data, however, are overt expressions of concern that emissaries from Rafah, Hebron or Bethlehem might betray their fictive kin by carrying out physical acts of terror in their midst. Instead, the focus is overwhelmingly on one particular variant of risk outlined in chapter one, that of *reputational risk*.

Reputational risk awareness is a form of identity management, involving the protection and defence of a preferred version of the self (Goffman, 1956). This is enabled in part by the avoidance of both personal and ‘courtesy’ stigma. The term ‘courtesy stigma’ refers to the acquisition of a ‘spoiled identity’ via association with the attributes and actions of deviant others (Goffman, 1963). Within the context of sister city relationships, reputational risk is of central concern to governments, whose likelihood of re-

election is greatly diminished by a tarnished image, but it is also defended against by citizens for whom national and place identities are salient aspects of their valued self perceptions. For opponents of Palestinian relationships for whom the defence of the Israeli state was inseparable from other aspects of their personal identities, the notion of connecting themselves as figurative ‘relatives’ to enemies of Israel was out of the question.

The affective connotations of the ‘sister cities’ metaphor afforded debates involving Palestinian cities a deep emotional intensity for proponents, since it reinforced their contention that Palestinians are valued members of the human family. However that very intensity did not allow for any acknowledgment of social distance, which might have enabled opponents who balked at being classified as fictive kin with Palestinians for biographical reasons to engage in cooperative peace building projects out of more pragmatic motivations. Several speakers who objected to the Olympia proposal, for example, voiced support for the provision of humanitarian aid to Rafah, but were offended at the suggestion that sister city ties with the people of Rafah might be made in their names. In the case of the U.S-Iraqi sister city relationships discussed in chapter six, it was reputational risk to their own nation state that Americans were defending against, and, by association, their own identities as American patriots. Highly flexible and unstable meanings within the human family and citizen diplomat metaphors allowed image ultimately to triumph over reality for consensus movement peace actors.

Implications for policy and practice

The data and analysis from this study lead me to conclude that it is unrealistic and unreasonable to expect local authorities to address issues of

serious, ongoing international conflict by means of locally contested sister city relationships. As noted in chapter one, the capacity of urban governments around the world has been compromised in recent decades by a debilitating combination of reduced income and an expanding array of responsibilities and expectations, including an ever-present imperative to manage risk. In addition, councils are exposed to the constant scrutiny of a sceptical press and the often incompatible demands of culturally and politically diverse urban populations. Pro-Palestinian peace actors who responded to the promise of the 'Eisenhower story' found their hopes and expectations dashed when local authorities inevitably rejected proposals that caused unrest within their own municipalities, leaving council members collectively vulnerable to suggestions of cowardice or racism. Such outcomes are in the interests of neither the citizen peace groups who have worked hard to attain council endorsement nor the councils themselves, which must be seen to be responding to the requirements of the 'people of the city' as a whole.

Crucially, in attempting to manage contested sister city proposals and relationships, councils are dealing with an ill-defined and highly unstable entity, engagement with which attracts negative risk to individual councillors and their municipalities without adequate compensating rewards. The high semantic plasticity of the sister cities model means that neither councils nor citizens have recourse to any consistent definitions that could clarify the boundaries of sister city relationships, or their mutual obligations in relation to them. In practice, the idea of sister cities is so elastic in meaning and application as to enable it to be appropriated as 'all things to all people', and imposes a similar role on local authorities. As Healey (2002) argues,

(i)n the sphere of politics and public administration, images of the city are filtered and used, to present the city to outsiders and citizens. ... It is in the arena of city governance that the multiple mental images of the city frequently jostle for expression and attention ... However, developing a politically and organisationally useful conception of a city is no easy task. Any city is many cities ... It therefore matters which city images are called up and consolidated in public policy and how this is achieved (2002:1782).

Having identified the problem preventing sister city peace relationships from fulfilling the high expectations placed upon them as pervasive and excessive ambiguity, the next step is to consider options for reducing that ambiguity at the level of local governance. One possible alternative is to abandon the sister cities model altogether for the purposes of peace building, in favour of one that is considerably less ambiguous in its name, intent and operation, such as the Peace Commission established by the City Council of Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1982. Officially titled the *Cambridge Commission on Nuclear Disarmament and Peace Education*, the original purpose of the commission was “to address the concerns of war and peace in the age of nuclear weapons”. It currently

promotes peace and social justice within Cambridge – at the personal, neighborhood, and citywide levels – and in the wider world. It challenges local forms of discrimination that foster violence and promotes ideas and programs that affirm diversity and build community ... It links peace groups, social justice efforts, anti-violence coalitions, communities, and the municipal government” (City of Cambridge website, 2009).

Although this particular Commission supports Cambridge’s sister cities as part of its activities, it is an independent body that is not aligned to any single

international municipal partner, has a clearly defined goal, involves no council funded travel and has the added advantage of addressing social injustice within its own city as well as at the international scale. In principle, such a municipal institution could satisfy the requirements of both the Friends of Hebron and the Inner West Chavurah in Leichhardt, as discussed in chapter five, by placing discussions of controversial political issues, and organisational and identity constraints on addressing potential responses to those issues, openly upon the municipal table. In addition, it could provide an enabling structure through which national and local governments might communicate more directly on issues of foreign policy. City Peace Commissions or similar offices might therefore constitute a viable alternative to sister city peace relationships at local and international scales.

The second option is to disambiguate the existing sister city model by rendering explicit and problematising the metaphoric entailments that pervade sister city discourses. Elaborating on the work of Schön (1979), an unnamed scholar from the 'Governance through Metaphor' project of the *Union of International Associations* (n/d) writes that

(t)here is a marked tendency to be unaware of the metaphors that shape perceptions and understanding of social situations. Although metaphors are at once tacit and often outside of explicit experience, they represent a special way of seeing, a way of selecting and naming "facts" that can filter or distort what is taken in. For Schön, if the metaphor remains tacit, it effectively exerts a "spell" that conditions the way in which a situation is perceived as problematic. The consequence of such tacit metaphors can be dangerously counter-productive. Metaphors can constrain and sometimes dangerously control the way in which people and groups construct the world in which they act. If, however, the metaphor no longer remains tacit, because an effort is made to "spell it out", other possibilities emerge. The assumptions which flow

from the metaphor can be elaborated in terms of the appropriateness of the metaphor to the circumstances in question.

Furedi (2002:113) notes that “a lack of clarity about the terms on which relationships are built” reinforces perceptions that it is better to ‘play safe’ when dealing with unknown others. The data and analysis provided by this study demonstrate that the sister cities metaphor calls up confusing and conflicting images of the city in the minds of citizens, which are counterproductive for the peace building potential of local civic action. The ‘sister’ metaphor and the fictive kinship sentiments and obligations it entails are open to a variety of interpretations across time and space, which are inevitably resisted by some groups, and exploited by others, within the politically and culturally diverse late modern city. Furthermore, dissonant applications of the ‘sister’ trope as ‘lovers’ and ‘marriage partners’ in sister city discourses indicate that the original metaphor is out of step with the speed of change and complexities of late modern human relationships.

Czarniawska (2004) acknowledges the need for just enough ambiguity of meaning to allow for flexibility in organisations, suggesting a boundary object function for metaphorical expression. In her own research, she found that

metaphors were an invaluable tool of organizing. One reason was that they provided ambiguity, indispensable for people with many different interests to unite in a collective endeavour without necessarily uniting their points of view. Another, and opposite, reason was that, by familiarising the unknown, they reduced the uncertainty caused by new and surprising situations, abundant in organising efforts. The third reason was that they provided color and entertainment to the sometimes dreary everyday-life in work organizations (2004:46).

At the same time, however, she became aware that “metaphors can disorganize a city while organizing the understanding of its citizens” (2004:62). Likening metaphorical representations of the urban milieu to “an exotic flower in the midst of the evenly cut lawn – frightening, disgusting, appealing, but always evoking strong emotions”, she warns of “the possibility of another state of affairs, a lawn so filled with exotic flowers that the tired eye longs for the tranquilizing effect of cut grass” (2004:47). In line with Czarniawska’s simile, I contend that what is required if the sister city model is to be retained, is fewer exotic flowers and more cut grass. A transition to a much less metaphoric, ‘flat’ form of public discourse is in order for international municipal cooperation with a peace building agenda.

Sister city relationships may appear to contain enough resilience to function as boundary objects when their proposed or existing municipal partners are relatively ‘safe sisters’, and remain so under conditions of cultural and political change. The primary focus of most cultural sister city relationships is not addressing such extreme issues as violence and bloodshed, since peaceful relations between the nations concerned are already in place. Even so, relatively minor political and cultural differences can undermine peaceful coexistence, and relationships involving cultural exchange projects in less challenging contexts have a less urgent, but nevertheless significant, role to play in facilitating peaceful and productive endeavours between people from diverse social worlds.

As indicated in chapter seven, however, problematic trends are emerging at less politically and ideologically intense registers, which serve to

nudge peace building further off the agenda for even these relationships. ‘Separate spheres and hostile worlds’ reasoning calls for clearer, quantifiable objectives in sister city relationships, with specific regard to economic return. The desired model for its proponents is the purely strategic economic relationship, for which peace building is not an issue. Metonymic sister city weddings are of some concern for their prioritisation of aesthetic and commercial dimensions of international exchange, thereby diverting local civic energies and attention away from issues of social justice, and from political avenues more appropriate and functional for addressing those issues. These urban extravaganzas are benign inventions which bring considerable pleasure to participants and promote local economic development, but it is difficult to justify claims that such staged and superficial interactions address the current political imperative for international peace building. Finally, the embryonic turn towards nationalist ideologies indicated in war and blood themed sister city discourses is by far the most troubling of the alternative directions identified, for its potential to play a peace-*diminishing* role in future international relations.

Limitations and strengths of the study

The scope of this thesis has been limited by logistical constraints of time, space and funding. Under ideal conditions, a study of the capacity of sister city relationships to build international peace under conditions of serious, ongoing geopolitical conflict would include qualitative interviews with a wider sample of participants drawn from both international cities for which a partnership is proposed, but this was beyond the reach of a doctoral thesis. I have also addressed in less detail than I would have preferred the role played the news

media in amplifying or attenuating public perceptions of risks posed by particular sister city relationships. This was due to space limitations and the need to prioritise the perspectives of embodied social actors.

In spite of these unavoidable constraints, I am confident that this study constitutes a strong and valuable contribution to the scholarly literature on sister city relationships, on several dimensions. The first is that I have identified a specific objective sought by sister city peace actors, in the form of the boundary object. This concept affords substance to the imprecise notion of ‘building peace through understanding’ that is commonly invoked in sister city discourses. It also provides a focus for evaluating the progress and utility of existing relationships, in terms of increased awareness of the perspectives of diverse interactional partners. The second is that I have constructed an analytical model to ‘pin down’ sister city relationships as an object of empirical research, thereby forging a pathway for future researchers to address the serious deficiency that has been identified in the academic literature on sister city relationships in general, and on culture and peace based relationships in particular. Thirdly, I have identified the problem obstructing both the peace building capacity of sister city peace relationships and research into those relationships as excessive ambiguity, and suggested options for addressing that problem at the scale of local governance.

Finally, the research process itself has been of significant value to my own development as a researcher, in that it has helped to restore my sense of optimism regarding the capacities, inclinations and motivations of American and Australian citizens and local authorities under the anomic conditions that characterise late modern ‘risk society’. Beck (1997) remarks on the

satisfactions to be gained from obtaining evidence that pessimistic claims of a pervasive 'ego-society' may be proven wrong (1997:121). Sociological theory and popular discourses often frame late twentieth century and early twenty-first century urban subjects as highly individualistic, suspicious of unknown others, and disinclined to engage in civic activities, and local authorities as resistant to change and lacking the capacity and experience to deal with issues of wider significance than local service delivery. Challenging such negative and generalised evaluations, the data from this study suggest that the contemporary urban subject may be just as likely to be enthusiastic, altruistic, and possessed of a sophisticated understanding of political issues at local, international and global scales.

Delving deeply into the subjective perceptions of participants in the course of qualitative research can have an emotional impact on researchers Gilbert (2001), and I have referred earlier to feelings of discomfort and frustration experienced during my research for this project. However the process also afforded moments of joy and encouragement, most specifically in the context of the qualitative interviews. The three citizen volunteers whose perspectives I sought on the Marrickville and Leichhardt sister city initiatives, Jennifer, Carole and Gael, were not united as a group in terms of the stance they had taken toward the proposals under discussion, since Gael was opposed to the Hebron proposal on several accounts. However, they are uniformly revealed to be morally motivated, politically aware, reflexively conscious and simultaneously locally/ globally orientated subjects, who have jointly elevated the standard of public debate on Palestinian sister relationships for Australian municipalities far beyond that represented in the mainstream press. The CEO

of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, Mr Vic Alhadeff, is seen to be fulfilling the obligations of an institutional role that accords with his personal moral beliefs, through his tireless efforts to defend the interests of the disparate collectivity he was elected to represent.

In my personal experience, however, it was the interviews with the local councillors that were the primary source of satisfaction, since my expectations of local authorities, based on previous, unrelated experiences and on academic and media framings, had not been high. While the Mayor of Leichhardt had demonstrably taken a considered and capable approach in her response to the Hebron proposal, the fact that the proposal had been put on hold in the initial stages meant that I did not seek, and was not offered, as deep an understanding of her personal stance in relation to the debate as occurred with the two representatives from Marrickville council. The data from my interviews with Councillors Iskandar and Thanos disconfirm dismissive media representations of local officials as ‘p-plate politicians’, ‘well-meaning amateurs’ and ‘self-serving junketeers’. Both officials are shown to be ethical, responsible and highly competent political actors, who had reflected deeply and at length as to the implications of sister city relationships for their own municipality and for peace building at the international level. The fact that Mayor Thanos and Councillor Iskandar expressed differing and sometimes conflicting interpretations as to the proper nature and scope of sister city relationships, and their value for both local and international partners, points to the high semantic plasticity of the sister cities model rather than to any deficiencies of insight, understanding or capacity on the parts of these impressive local politicians. The strong and innovative direction taken by

Marrickville council on Middle Eastern peace issues underscores the reality that Australian cities have now moved onto the national political agenda (Troy, 2003), and clearly marks the trajectory of this particular council as a priority for future research into international peace building at the local scale.

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Appendix 1. Profiles of Olympia, Marrickville and Leichhardt

Municipality of Olympia

For many generations the area now known as Olympia was a favorite shellfish gathering site for Coastal Salish tribes, including the Nisqually, Duwamish and Squaxin ... The name of Olympia was selected by Isaac N. Ebey, a local resident, in honor of the majestic Olympic mountains visible to the north on a clear day. With an economic engine fueled to a great extent by state government activity, Olympia - the Capital City of Washington State - enjoys the benefits of a stable work force, engaged and educated community, and well-supported school system. Mild winters and pleasantly warm summers make the Olympia area an ideal place for outdoor recreation ... Public trails lead to saltwater beaches where native Americans once met for potlatches, through woods thick with big-leaf maples and towering Douglas firs. Salmon return to Budd Inlet each fall and run the ladder under the 5th Avenue Bridge. Olympia's strategic geographic location along Interstate 5 at the gateway to the Olympic Peninsula puts one within two hours or less of regional recreational attractions - from hiking and skiing in the mountains to beachcombing along ocean shores.

Olympia City Council webpage, 'About Olympia'
<http://www.ci.olympia.wa.us/community/about-olympia.aspx>

Municipality of Marrickville

The Marrickville area is a great place to live and visit and represents the best of multicultural inner-city living. Marrickville has a vibrant, ethnically diverse population of approximately 75,000 residents with people from more than 100 different cultures, speaking more than 70 different languages. The community acknowledges and is proud of its original people - the Cadigal-Wangal - and of each new generation of immigrants that have settled here. The area is less than 10 kilometres from the city centre, and comprises some of Sydney's oldest suburbs - Camperdown, Dulwich Hill, Enmore, Lewisham, Marrickville,

Newtown, Petersham, St Peters, Stanmore, Sydenham and Tempe. People are attracted to the Marrickville area because of its convenience and inner city character, its vibrant street culture, multicultural influences, eating and shopping experiences, and its friendly community feel.

Marrickville City Council webpage, 'Welcome to Marrickville: Information for new citizens' <http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/council/welcome.htm>

Municipality of Leichhardt

Leichhardt was incorporated as a local government area in 1871. In 1949 the municipalities of Annandale and Balmain were amalgamated with Leichhardt. In 1967, the municipality boundary was varied to include Glebe and parts of Camperdown. In 2003, the municipal boundary was again varied, this time to exclude Glebe and Forest Lodge which are now part of the City of Sydney. The suburbs within the Leichhardt local government area are Leichhardt, Lilyfield, Balmain (including Balmain East), Birchgrove, Rozelle and Annandale. The municipality of Leichhardt has an estimated resident population of 51,142 (ABS June 2005 preliminary figures) within an area of 1,003 hectares. There are 79 parks, gardens or reserves covering 84 hectares providing both active and passive recreation. The municipality also has a 17km frontage to Sydney harbour and Parramatta River.

Leichhardt City Council webpage, 'Snapshot of Leichhardt' <http://www.leichhardt.nsw.gov.au/Snapshot-of-Leichhardt.html>